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CONTENTS

The Lonesome Traveller. <i>A Story</i>	<i>John William Corrington</i>	5
White Horses. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Robert Clayton Casto</i>	60
The Present Course of Southern Fiction: <i>Everynegro</i> and Other Alternatives	<i>Thomas H. Landess</i>	61
Litigation at Burning Bush. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Geary Blankenship</i>	86
Chateaubriand and "The Girl from Louisiana"	<i>Harry Redman, Jr.</i>	87
Three Poems	<i>Edgar Marcel Smith</i>	100
Certain Ladies of Quality: Faulkner's View of Women and the Evidence of "There was a Queen"	<i>Melvin E. A. Bradford</i>	106
Three Poems	<i>Ellen Bryant Voigt</i>	140
Two Sections of <i>Jason</i> , A New Novel	<i>Warren Leamon</i>	143
Words from the Cenozoic. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Mary Neal Northcut</i>	173
The Historian and His Politics: Taine, Aulard, and the French Revolution	<i>Francis Bullitt Lowry</i>	174
Three Poems	<i>Eugene Williamson</i>	186
The Return. <i>A Story</i>	<i>Marion Montgomery</i>	189
Lost Doctrine. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Arthur M. Sampley</i>	201
<i>Sillas, Cabrestos y Fierros</i> : Some Notes on Spanish Contributions to the Techniques and Equipment of the Western Cattle Industry	<i>Sandra L. Myres</i>	202

Two Poems	<i>William Otha Hopper</i>	211
He That Increaseth Knowledge or Robert Burton on Modern Education	<i>Edward Krickel</i>	213
To the Old Man Dead in Paterson. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Barriss Mills</i>	223
Dialogue of a Woman and Her Dreams. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Judith H. McDowell</i>	225
A Nail in the Heel. <i>A Story</i>	<i>Steven Turner</i>	226
Poems	<i>Coleman Barks</i>	238
Theme and Structure in <i>The Fathers</i>	<i>Frederick K. Sanders</i>	244
On an Anniversary. <i>Verse</i>	<i>L. H. Chambers</i>	257
A Crossing at the Intersection. <i>Verse</i>	<i>John Taylor</i>	258
The Brierly Suicide: A New Look at an Old Ambiguity	<i>Charles C. Clark</i>	259
Two Poems	<i>William J. Free</i>	266
Eliza Gant as Negative Symbol in <i>Look Homeward, Angel</i>	<i>Clayton L. Eichelberger</i>	269
On Contemplating Corlon. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Luise Putcamp, Jr.</i>	279
Study in Kore. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Stanley Plumly</i>	280
Cotton Mather: The Man and the Myth	<i>William M. Richardson</i>	281
Two Poems	<i>Sidney J. Landman</i>	295
Reviews		297
Contributors		302

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THE LONESOME TRAVELLER

BY JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON

THE STATE EDITOR put him on the train. He bought the ticket, and he bought Robert Pleasance a copy of *Time* magazine with a picture of Jean Harlowe on the cover, and told him, —you read this on the way boy. You read the news and see if you can learn to write this way.

And the boy, who was two weeks out of Princeton College then, and less than a week out of Philadelphia, and three days in the newsroom of the *Press-Scimitar*, and who was the only available man for a trip out of town, listened to the State Editor tell him, —You could wait ten years for a break like this. You're not going to where a lynching has been. You're going to see one making. By tomorrow night there'll be a nigger hanging off the courthouse balcony or roasted or floating face down in a creek somewhere near Wildwood or I'll give you my autographed picture of Bilbo descending from the cross. Now what you want to do is keep your mouth shut and stay out of the way and make sure they don't know where you're from.

—You mean the paper, the boy asked quickly, trying to put the question before the State Editor got his breath.

—Sure I mean the paper, the State Editor said.

Then he paused. —O Christ, he gasped, I never thought. If those plowpolishers spot your accent . . .

—Maybe I could fake a Southern accent, the boy said obligingly.

—That's okay, the State Editor told him. —Just don't miss any of it. Maybe there's a tree near the jail.

They stood on the platform now, and the brakeboxes poured steam around them. Negroes pushing baggage carts and hauling ice vans moved past in the haze. The engine coughed heavily, and the State Editor shouted,—What . . . ?

—I said shouldn't I have a camera, the boy called back.

—Jesus, the Editor moaned. —Not unless you want to eat it or have it shoved in your ear. You got a rubber camera?

—If somebody asks me what I'm doing there, what'll I tell them, the boy asked him.

—You tell 'em you're from the Singer Sewing Machine or a drummer for Nabisco or maybe that you're out from Gayoso Street shopping for fresh talent. Tell 'em what it looks like they'll believe. Unless they ask you to help. Hey, maybe that would be an angle.

The State Editor's eyes gleamed, and he licked his index finger, scratching bold headlines in the steam:

—*I was part of a maddog mob . . . by . . . what's your name, boy?*

—Robert Pleasance.

—*. . . By Robert Pleasance. I was caught in the subhuman machine. I was a single cell in a combination of judge, jury and executioner . . . All around me raw throats and gaping animal mouths spewed hate and determination . . .*

The State Editor stopped.

—No, he said ruefully. It would be great. It would make the wire and run all around the country, but I guess you

better play it coy. Jesus, I wish I was on beat again . . . I could . . . But if you were to slip up, we wouldn't have anything, would we?

—I guess not, the boy said doubtfully.

—You remember, the State Editor told him: —'All the news that'll fit in the print?' If it looks safe afterwards, get details. If this sheriff goes out for sandwiches, you find out whether they're cheese or bologna. Try to get interviews with the local heroes. Talk to 'em like you're an admiring citizen. Maybe you could get a wild slant on it. Maybe you could get one of the educated ones to say Hitler has the right idea. See if you can get Hitler into it.

—How can you be so sure . . . , the boy tried to ask him.

But the train brakes were releasing now, and the quick spumes of wet steam circled them as the State Editor pushed him up into the coach entry. The baggage negroes were moving back from the train, and the single stooped conductor waved his boxy cap whining, —All aboard . . . board.

Robert was on the bottom of the coach now, and he had to shout:

—What's on Gayoso Street?

—What . . . ?

—Gayoso Street . . .

The State Editor's face was screwed into an impossible expression with his effort to hear. —O, he yelled back, —nothing now.

—Then what . . .

—Never mind, the State Editor shouted hoarsely. —Just keep your eyes on that jail.

—How do you know for sure they'll lynch that . . .

—O God, the State Editor howled above the rising clatter of the coachwheels. —He's a nigger who raped a white

woman and then showed his ass to half of Wildwood, Mississippi, running away from her house, and who doesn't even deny . . . he . . . maybe you . . . they'll get him a psychiatrist . . . have a prayer meeting . . . maybe you . . .

But the State Editor had stopped trotting alongside the moving train by then, and stood arms akimbo, as if he were pleading with Robert, or as if he had a heavy satchel in either hand. His lips still moved in voiceless reply, his face still pumping forth words Robert could not hear. And as the train gathered speed, Robert watched the State Editor's face diminish from melon to baseball size, and finally to an indistinguishable smear of white framed by columns supporting the platform roof, a shapeless jot lost in the blur of steam and station lights strung out over the vacant silver rails that struck cold and shining backward from the coach's rear, backward through darkness toward the tiny glimmering island of the platform's end.

II

The sheriff was watching a shred of peaked moon switch quickly through a raft of low-hanging cloud. In the southeast thunder coughed, and the clouds were packing dense and solid along a line five or six miles below the Haggard place. Outside the air was hot and stiff and motionless, and even the insect sounds were muted, tentative as the air.

A tall roundshouldered negro man stepped up onto the boardwalk and placed a paper bag and a dixie cup on the plank beside the sheriff.

—Ike, Sheriff Wilson said, —I want you to go on home now.

—It could be a lot of trouble for one man.

—There won't be any trouble, the sheriff told him, open-

ing the sack and spreading the two sandwiches and the slice of pickle out on it. —Did you bring me sugar?

—Already in the coffee, Ike said. —One spoon and a little more.

—That's right, the sheriff said.

—I reckon I could stay awhile.

—No, the sheriff said, pulling a shard of wilted lettuce off the first sandwich and closing it again. —I want you home.

—Seems like you ought to have somebody here.

—Ike, the sheriff said, —there's not a white man in Mississippi I could show my back to with Lemmy in that cell.

The old negro sat down a step lower than the sheriff and pursed his lips. He drew three lines in the dust of the street, and his eyes, dull with the subtle scum of age, marked the course of his fingers.

—You know how old Lemmy Fuller is?

—I know, the sheriff said.

—Seems like dey could take it out on an old man, Ike said.

—Who'd you rape, the sheriff asked him. —Are you volunteerin'?

—Ain't hardly grown, anyway.

—I reckon he was old enough to pull that old lady down.

—That what she say.

—Well, they'll try Lemmy.

—Will if he still around in a couple of weeks.

—He'll be around, the sheriff said. —Now go on home, and if it looks quiet I'll send for you tomorrow or the next day.

—I'll go home, Ike told him, —but if they's trouble, I'm goin to sneak back up here.

—Don't do that, the sheriff said shortly. —If there's trouble I'll be shootin at anythin that shows. And anyway I

can't take care of all the niggers in Wildwood unless I shove 'em in with Lemmy. Let me take care of one at a time.

—Anyway, Ike said, —you send for me.

—I'll do it, the sheriff told him. —Now move. Look down south. You're goin to get wet through before you make it home.

—No, Ike said, —I'll just get out on the road and run a piece.

—No, the sheriff said, —you take the wettin. I wouldn't do any runnin tonight.

III

The train was moving faster than it seemed. Robert could feel almost no motion, but trees and wide fields snapped past in the deepening twilight. The coach lights were not yet on, and he stared out at the tranced landscape: tiny crossroads stopping places—a gas station, a general store, a house or two. Further on, a town with one narrow string of street-lights running through its center like a line of fire cutting it in two. As he watched, the darkness became complete, a porter turned on the warm weak overhead lights, and a man laden with carrying-cases almost fell into the seat opposite him.

Robert watched him set cases under the seat, over the seat—two on the seat. He wondered incuriously what was in them. Then he found himself studying the man. He tried to turn his eyes away, to look out the window, down the aisle. He understood vaguely that Southerners, particularly country men, did not like to be stared at; that they took it as a form of discourtesy and sometimes reacted violently. He had seen a cripple on Beale Street knock a negro down with his cane

for no more obvious staring than Robert was doing now. But he couldn't help it.

It was as if the man had stepped into the train out of another century. He wore a bright yellow and black hound's tooth suit with a matching vest, a pocket-watch on a chain, a light brown bowler, a striped tan shirt with a black tie worked in a design of something like lemons. Robert did not look down. He felt almost certain that the shoes would be high-topped, and a tan so light it could be called yellow.

—Hot and sticky, the man said softly. —Sometimes it seems like the whole world is simmerin.

Robert smiled without answering. The remark gave him at least a shade of excuse for studying the man's face.

It was classic. Classic Southern redneck, Robert thought. Cheeks like slabs of overcooked ham, hair thin and colorless strewn across a pink scalp. Below the hair, above the bright cheeks a pair of small eyes seemed to have been shot into place from an airgun. Deeply seated, they were of no discernible shade between gray and green—something the color of slate with a peculiar quality of depthlessness as if they were bogus eyes cleverly painted upon expensive porcelain, surface only, without nerves or ichor or sight behind. Yet overall the face bore an expression of amused and indifferent benevolence.

—I always say this last heat makes a man feel like a walkin sore, the man said. —Job in the refuse.

—Is it always like this, Robert asked. He wanted to talk, to feel the man out as a kind of prelude to Wildwood. He tried to soften his accent.

—Like this? Always like this? Great Jesus, no. It gets worse, and it gets better. I've seen it in the 90's in November.

And I've seen it zero. I've seen the time you could freeze to death in Mississippi.

—You live in Mississippi?

The man smiled. His teeth were even and white—like those of a matinee idol in the face of a country storekeeper.

—Naw, he said. —I don't live anywhere. I'm a travelin man. I go one way and then another. I walk to and fro in the earth, and up and down in it. Just a son of God tryin to make his way.

—You're from the South, aren't you?

The man showed his amazing teeth again. —That's funny you should ask. I must be the only man in the world who honest to God don't know where he was born. I don't even know who I was when I was a young fella.

Robert frowned. He had heard that people here had a peculiar, broad and unpredictable sense of humor. There was almost no formality in them. An outlander, listening seriously to a fantastic story, might find himself on the butt-end of a bizarre joke.

—How's that, Robert said cautiously, trying an idiom that did not fit his tongue.

The man shrugged. —I came to myself in some woods over around Athens, Georgia, one day, he said. —I was half naked, and a nigger man was shakin my shoulder and askin me my name. When I got to sittin up, I found out I didn't have a name. Anyway, I couldn't think of one that sounded right. I had all kinds of names in my head, from alpha to omega, but they was just Tom and Joe and Smith and Jones. None of 'em meant anything. I couldn't remember a damned thing before I woke up with that nigger pokin me. This here is all I had on me outside of a pair of pants and a dirty under-shirt.

The man extended the fob end of his watch-chain so Robert could see a small metal key with a crest of some kind on it.

—It come from the University of Edinburgh, the man said. —In Scotland. I don't know how I came by it. I looked it up in a book. Maybe I went to school there. I seem to remember a good deal of things to be a poor boy. Like the Bible. I found out that very night in Athens that I knew the Bible like I'd wrote it. Picked up a Gideon's in the hotel and started to read; pretty soon I was recitin whole chapters without a word missed. Recitin at the top of my lungs, so the hotel man, who already had a fishy eye for me on account of the words we'd had when I registered, come up and threatened to throw me out.

—When you registered?

—Yeah, my name. I still didn't have one when that nigger got me into town. So I had to . . .

The porter was passing through the car, striking his melodious three-toned gong. —This is the first call fo' dinner. First call.

—How about that, the man asked Robert. —Why don't we just follow that darkie to where he's got the eats?

They were picking up fried chicken with their fingers. Robert still found his eyes stopping each time they lighted on the man opposite him. There was some indescribable quality about him—some aura generated perhaps by the clothes (which no longer seemed quite so wild, so outlandish to Robert), the eyes, the pink scalp beneath the colorless hair. Maybe it was the story, still unfinished, unresolved—left in escrow with an anonymous clerk in a nameless hotel two states over upset and threatening because of some unspecified happening: something about a name. The chicken was fine. There were biscuits and honey with it.

—So I had to come up with some kind of name. And the clerk didn't like it. I don't think he even believed it.

—What . . . ?

Lord, I ain't even introduced myself. I'm Gone. Able Gone.

—Gone?

—Sure. If I'd had more time, or if I'd had any sense at all comin in with that big-hearted nigger, I could of come up with somethin better. Or at least somethin not purely calculated to raise the back hair of a roomclerk or make a deputy sheriff start thumbin through old posters. But you got to keep in mind that I woke up just a little this side of a child. My growin up took place on that wagon between the woods and Athens. The first road sign we passed, I couldn't seem to read. By the time we got into town, I could even read the Atlanta papers. And later that Gideon Bible. That ain't bad.

—But Gone . . . ?

—I don't know. Afterward I tried to figure how Able Gone came out when that register was in front of me. I reckon it was because everythin in the past was gone for me. And I felt like the original man—the first man who ever yawned and come awake. But I had to be the second, didn't I? Cause there was that nigger pokin me when I come to myself. So he was Adam. Or God. And even havin to think fast for that register, I be damned if I was gonna put down Cain.

Mr. Gone buttered a biscuit delicately. Robert almost unconsciously waited for the twist, the punch-line that would reveal that it had all been a joke, a monstrously long shaggy dog of a yarn to pass time for them both. But Gone only smiled and swallowed his biscuit.

—So now I'm a drummer, he said.

—Drummer? The term meant something to Robert. But it was alien. He could not quite determine whether its strange-

ness was a matter of region or archaism.

—I travel in Bibles, Mr. Gone said. —I cover the Old Confederacy selling the Holy Word. You can have both testaments and the apocrypha for twenty-five dollars or fifty cents. One reads the same as the other. King James only. No Goodspeed or revised. No Douay-Rheims or confraternity. Just the old word. For the Old Confederacy. But I throw in Missouri and Kentucky, takin good intention into account.

Able Gone came into focus suddenly for Robert. —You know the South, then? You really understand it?

—As well as a panther knows the jungle, Mr. Gone said reaching for a chicken wing. —As well as a man can know anything he's always movin through and never stoppin in.

—How well is that?

—Fine and poorly. All the top and none of the bottom. I know the streets of Nashville and the alleys of Biloxi. I know a hundred men in Memphis and a little teeny old lady in Milledgeville. I know a veteran in Petersburg who looked on the living face of Robert E. Lee and a boy in New Orleans who called John Bell Hood father.

—What else is there?

Able Gone showed his teeth again as he signalled the waiter for coffee.

—Ah, he said. —Not one of those hundred in Memphis is a true man, and the little old lady forgets things. That man who saw Lee throw down his gun at Five Forks and never marched to Appomattox. Hood's son curses his father's name because the old general died a crippled pauper with nothin but pride in his pocket. And those streets and alleys are dark and empty, and a man can't see the reflection of his own face in a puddle of rain water there.

They walked back to the day coach. Robert swayed, almost

off balance, as they crossed between cars. The night had turned cool, and there was no moon. They were silent for a moment, watching tiny patches of light rise and vanish as the train pounded southward. Mr. Gone produced a book from somewhere. He drew a pair of goldrimmed spectacles from a vest pocket. He began to read slowly.

—*But the South signifies those who are within the church, namely, those who are in light as to cognitions; in like manner it signifies the light itself.*

—What's that, Robert asked.

—*The North signifies those who are outside the church, namely, those who are in darkness as to the varieties of faith. It also signifies the darkness with man.*

—Did you write that, Robert asked, knowing somehow the question was absurd.

—Me? Good Jesus, no. That's Swedenborg. Some man who had a vision. But it's in holy writ too: *Out of the South cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the north.*

Robert frowned. —What does it mean? What do you think it means?

Mr. Gone smiled gently. —Why, I ain't a preacher. I just deal in The Book. It's words. A lot of words. What do words mean?

—I deal in words, Robert said without meaning to. —I write for a paper.

—Well, Mr. Gone said, —you ought to be able to make out the Word and old Swedenborg better than I can. I'm just a naked babe compared to you. I'm only four years out of Athens. You can't expect too much.

—Do you believe in all that—about cold and darkness from the North? About the light in the South?

—If cold don't come from the North, my almanac and the

weather bureau have been lyin for a couple of hundred years. And I understand it's dark all winter way up in the North. I never been to see. It gives me goose-flesh. I like the sun. And where's the sun hottest and strongest?

—That's all in the natural order, Robert said, as if he were being cornered.

—Sure enough, Mr. Gone said. —That's just what preacher Swedenborg seems to say.

Robert felt warm, overheated—as if he had been fighting or arguing against odds.

—I wish I could understand this place, he said irrelevantly. —I keep feeling I need to know something I can't even guess at. Tell me about the South, Robert said. —Everything you know.

—It is a terrible land, Mr. Gone said slowly, in rich unstressed accents, turning toward the window, staring out at the seamless night.

IV

It was dawn when the conductor nudged Robert awake and told him Wildwood was next. He sat up suddenly and stared for a moment without comprehension into the monkeyface beneath a box cap studded with a tarnished Southern Railroad insignia.

—I say Wildwood comin up.

—O, Robert said.

It took him whole seconds to place himself, and by the time he had the triangulation worked out, the old man had slouched down the coach toward the negro section punching tickets and stirring other sleepers.

—Thanks, Robert called after him, and began straightening his tie and looking for his cigarettes.

He glanced across at the seat where Able Gone had been. It was empty. The sample cases were gone, and the seat looked as if no one had ever occupied it. For a moment Robert wondered if Gone had been something spawned by his imagination. In the light of dawn, the whole encounter seemed unlikely. But then so was this assignment. So was this inscrutable place.

When he stepped off the train, the sun was still down, but morning's pallor had begun to fade the darkness. Tight ranks of pine and sweetgum, the toy depot, the sign-encrusted junction of two dirt roads were stark and ugly, and somehow portentous as if the last troops of a defeated army had passed through only minutes before and the dust from their boots and caissons and horses barely settled in the angular roadway that speared off northwest and southeast, northeast and south.

One unshaded bulb spread itself thin behind a dirty station window, and the strengthless light, played out against the gray of morning, made the window shine with a vague flush of passing fever. Robert looked inside and saw that the ticket office and waiting rooms were empty. The single pendant bulb swung in a minor arc, almost imperceptibly moved by the fading vibrations of the train that was already far down the lusterless tracks, picking up speed and heading south. The inside of the station was as desolate and untenanted as if its occupants had gathered their belongings swiftly, and had gone suddenly a century before, leaving yellowed obsolete schedules for trains that no longer ran and gumless ticket envelopes and flyspecked baggage checks, had left all the matter of their calling in one last static moment before confusion had undone them.

He walked down the length of the creaking platform and

out into the silent asphalt street that, as far as he could see, was the town's only paved way. Down toward the end of it, down where it turned and disappeared in a jumble of trees and shadowy buildings, he saw one blur of weak spectral light that, even as he watched it, seemed to fade and join the rising glow of morning. Then, in the distant bulb's slight area of shine, he saw a white board sign: *Inezs Lunch*. He picked up his bag and walked across the dusty junction where a speckled mongrel sat staring down the southeastern extension of the road as if it heard an approaching wagon or perhaps was still listening to the last faint subaural rumblings of one passed long enough ago for the dust to have settled behind it, its passage known only to the mottled cur that did not even turn its head as Robert stepped past.

As he cut diagonally across the street, Robert passed a warped curl of oak that made a dense shadow of darker gray against the quickening morning that was moving through the quiet streets from east to west now. The higher branches of the tree pulsed fitfully in a breeze he could not feel, and its leaves drummed softly, softly sounded against one another caught in that morning breath that had not dipped to touch the street, had not yet shaken the faded board signs hanging out over the street beyond shabby whitewashed storefronts.

Robert stopped short of the rough uneven boardwalk ahead and stared down the empty street. There was nothing. Nothing except a mute expanse of shops and stores lining either side of the street, nothing except the pastel glow of the street's asphalt shimmering under untracked dust. Nothing but an unquenched mumble of insects in the grass and in the trees rising visible behind the scant double rank of stores.

Robert stepped up onto a moaning length of pine planking that served for a sidewalk and entered the cafe.

He dropped his bag near the door and sat uncertainly on a scarred creaking stool at the counter. A withered slattern moved opposite him behind the counter, stopped, said nothing. Waited.

—Coffee, Robert said, and wondered if he should have added “please” when his voice, the first he had heard in half an hour, sounded brusque and brittle from the massive silence.

—Coffee, the woman repeated toward the rear of the place. And from behind two incredibly greasy and hand-smearred swinging doors came an answering rattle, and the sound of shifting crockery—cup against cup, metal against wood.

He felt the stringy muscles of his shoulders and upper back relax as if some imminent and terrible danger had just passed him by, as if by acceptance of the order, the hag had validated his right to be in the town. The moisture that coated the palms of his hands went chill now that he had stopped walking, and the imponderable silence of the cafe, the street—the whole town, seemed to move in upon him as surely as if it were some recognizable pattern of sound.

Where could they find violence in this place, he wondered. Where would they get it? It’s like an embalmed village. Like Pompeii or Herculaneum. As if some unsubstantial volcano spews misty lava over these streets every night and nothing moves or changes, decays or grows until the sun clears away the darkness. And every day is a hundred years after the last, so what kind of violence can you find in a town where no issue reaching farther than the end of the street has been argued since those men cut their mules loose from ruined

cannon and empty supply wagons and rode home a hundred years ago? Maybe I'll write a feature about a ghost town two hundred miles from Memphis.

Some movement across the counter brought his eyes up from the scarred and crusty varnish of its top. As he raised his eyes, a thick white cup slid across the opaque surface toward him. A circlet of steam stirred lazily above the flat dark liquid inside and drifted almost intact toward his face. There was no cream beside it; the sugar bowl contained the only spoon he saw. The woman had moved back down the counter toward the swinging doors, was standing arms folded, hips propped against the low wooden sideboard that stretched from one end of the counter to the other below a chipped and lusterless mirror, and staring absently at a silent jukebox huddled between a file of empty booths that lined the far wall.

—It's a quiet town you have here, Robert said, his voice sounding high and hollow and alien in the empty reaches of the place.

And she, still staring sightless at the squat, unlighted phonograph, said:

—Mostly.

—It must be nice to live where it's quiet and where there aren't traffic problems and factory smells, and all these woods.

The woman had not looked at him since putting the coffee down. As far as he knew, she had not even looked at him then. Still her voice was easy; if there was no friendliness in it, there was no animosity either.

—I reckon all places are nice in their way. Some like city; some like country. I reckon there's a place for everybody.

And now her eyes left the jukebox, passed upward across the dirtflecked mottled skylight, moved back down through

the cool air that hung like fresh-laundered work clothes in the place, and settled casually on him.

—You a drummer?

—A what?

—Drummer. You sellin something?

—Well, Robert said, —yes.

—What're you sellin, she asked him.

—I sell . . sewing machines.

—What kind?

—Singer.

—Funny, she said. —They got a store here sellin 'em now.

—I just service the account. I bring in new models and so forth.

—What you got new *this* time?

And Robert wondered just what he did have new. What technical improvement he could manufacture quickly enough to move out of the impasse. But in another second, he didn't need it.

Because the springless screen door of the cafe rattled open and clattered shut behind a huge overalled hunk of a man who dropped a feed sack at the end of the counter and lumbered over to the stool nearest that same end. He tossed a shapeless soiled felt hat over onto the feed sack and Robert saw his belly and shoulders settle slowly as he hunched forward over the counter.

He was not an ugly man. There was no particular feature distorted, no limb missing or made askew. No sullen or brutal cast to his expression. And yet there was an ugliness about him. Something beyond the gracelessness and the sag and the hunch. He looks like Unreason or Force or some abstraction in a morality, Robert thought. He looks shiftless, but I'll bet he's not. He looks run to fat, but I'll bet he's stronger than

five of me. It's the look of all these people. In Philly I learned to read the looks of the people. But here I can't tell size and strength apart. He might be the town drunk or the mayor up early to do chores. They all look tough and none of them have expressions. Only faces.

—Coffee, the man said without inflection, with no more volume than was needed to carry his voice downcounter to the woman who had not moved, was still standing hips pressed against the near counter and eyes bright and non-committal upon Robert, who turned his eyes from the man and studied the nicked rim of his cup.

—Coffee, the woman said in monotonous reply.

And behind the enigmatic doors at the rear, Robert heard again the identical sounds that had followed his own order: metal, wood, crockery in indistinguishable order. And this time a negro woman came through the doors, handed the waitress a steaming cup and propped the doors open with a sliver of wood while she carried a wire rack of glasses from the rear, hefted it onto the back counter, and began stacking the thick tumblers in rows beneath the mirror.

—What about it, the woman said, and Robert's head jerked in a half-circle from the rear of the place to where the waitress was setting coffee down in front of the overalled man.

—Nothin yet, the man said. And his voice was still innocent of inflection, as clear and inhumanly precise as some mechanical speaker operated by bellows and a metallic diaphragm.

—What're you goin to do, the woman asked him.

—Wait, he said, and raised the cup to his lips.

—Wait?

—He ain't goin nowhere, the man said. —He's just sittin

there wonderin if it was worth it. Or maybe he's past wonderin about that. Maybe he's wonderin how long he's got.

—You talked to Tom Wilson?

The big man wiped his mouth with the back of one hand. His mouth was hidden in a thicket of dark beard, whiskers that covered chin, cheeks, and ranged upward to meet an uncut swatch of hair that drooped down in front of his ear. If he possessed any expression at all, it had nothing to do with his eyes, and if it centered about his lips, it was invisible, lost in the wilderness of unkempt hair that covered his face below the thick nose.

—No, he answered the woman, pushing the empty cup across the counter toward her and heaving himself up off the stool. —There ain't no use talkin to him till I got somethin to say. There ain't nothin to say till we know what we want to do.

He walked stiff-legged toward the door saying nothing else, gathering hat and trowsack up in one sudden anomalous graceful movement, pushing through the noisy screen to stop on the board walk in front of the place. Robert's eyes followed him and saw the expressionless indecipherable face go bright as a first shard of morning sun glinted off it; saw the single eye of the overalled man that was in his (Robert's) line of vision shimmer like a tiny golden medal in the sun, or like the scales of a dead serpent turned belly-up, obscene, uncompromisingly dreadful in the shrill light of morning.

An old negro was fumbling with the shades in the sheriff's office when Robert finally crossed the street a few minutes later. Robert watched him through the dirty glass of the unbarred window. At first the old man could not get the shades raised. Then, one after another, they clattered and flapped to

their uppermost limits, and the old man, cursing quietly, without anger or even impatience, stood back surveying them as if they might come down again as quickly and unpredictably as they had fluttered upward beyond his grasp. The shade pull was an inch or two higher than he could reach. It dangled and arced from side to side like a tiny impotent noose. Robert stepped into the office.

—Every mornin, the old negro was saying. —Seems like one mornin or another I could get 'em to do right.

He turned to face Robert. —You from Memphis, ain't you?

Robert stared at him. —Yes. I came in this morning.

—Wif de paper. You come down on account of dat useless sonofabitch Lemmy Fuller. You come to see 'em take him out.

Robert's mouth was dry. He tried to figure how even a negro handyman had already found him out. Found out not merely that he was an outlander (which anyone in the town could have told with a single glance) but just what kind of outlander he was, and what he was up to. And found out all of it before he had even opened his mouth in the town. Except to buy a cup of coffee.

He remembered what Mr. Gone had said. A terrible land. The whirlwind breeds in the South. And what else? Magic? Second sight? Or more probably some idiotic mistake that had run before him mutely announcing everything he wanted to keep hidden. He wondered for a moment if the negro Fuller felt this way: naked. Condemned without trial or even indictment. He was guilty. What he was, what he was there for were known. There was nothing to discuss, nothing to deny. When the town had decided what to do about him, it would act. Or not act. He felt more lonely than if he had been marooned in the wild dark reaches of Alaska.

—Sheriff be along. You want a look at dat nigger?

—What, Robert said. —What nigger?

He had said it, had for the first time in his life elided and buried the final vowel of that formal noun as a Southerner would, had followed the old man's tongue. He felt the rising sun reflecting against the back of his neck and shoulders.

—De one you here to see about. De one what laid hands on Miz Calhoun de widow. Sheriff don't mind if you has a look.

—What would I want to see him for?

The old man arched his gray eye brows and studied Robert as if he were another refractory window-shade. —I reckon if you gonna write about somefin, you gonna want a look at it. How can you write about somefin you ain't even seen?

Robert stared at him. He could think of nothing to say at first. Then, weakly, almost apologetically:

—What kind of man is he? Why did he do it—if he did do it?

There was disgust in the old man's eyes. —He just a common ordinary nigger what work out of Mister Biff Moles' cuttin mill, and he done it cause he was born half a fool and whiskey took care of de other half. And he done it. Cause if he hadn't done it he wouldn't be back dere playin two-handed blackjack by hisself wif my cards.

—How does anybody know he did it? What kind of proof is there?

The old man shrugged. Robert had ceased to interest him. Robert was either a dolt or some kind of foreigner who could not quite grasp even the simplest, most elementary information. But there remained courtesy. And he was not especially in a hurry to pull the shades down again.

—De sheriff know on account of he talked to Miz Calhoun, and den asked around to de neighbors and den got to askin de

colored folks. Preacher Slim Tarrant of de African Congregation asked too and dey found out it was Lemmy. Wasn't no hard thing to find out. I don't know nothin about no proof. He didn't steal nothin you could see, so they couldn't find it on him. It don't make no difference. Everybody knows.

—Isn't a man innocent until he's proved guilty around here, Robert asked.

—I ain't no lawyer. I reckon a man is innocent til he's done wrong. After dat, as best I can tell, he guilty.

It was a stand-off. The old man and Robert had had enough of one another. Robert stood in the doorway as if he were awaiting an invitation to come all the way in. The old negro dragged a chair to the window. Robert, turning to watch him, caught a glint of sunlight off metal out of the corner of his eye. He turned and looked at the featureless windows of the upper story across the street. As he looked, a gun barrel was drawn back inside and a dun curtain with a lighter patch on it fluttered across the dark opening. Robert looked back at the old man. He had hold of the shade pull and was drawing it down slowly as if it were alive and might try to escape.

—There's somebody across the street in that window. Somebody with a gun.

—Sho, the negro said, stepping down from the battered chair with the careful heaviness of age. —Sho.

—What can we . . .

—Nothin. Dat's de law. Dat's Sheriff Wilson. He been sleepin over dere since he brung Lemmy in. In case somebody was to go for him. He got a ten-gauge over dere. He kin clean off dis whole street if he please.

—What if they came when he was asleep?

—Dat gun stick out de window all night long. Dey can't tell when he's sleepin. What if dey picks de wrong time, an'

he's awake? An' anyhow, he sleep in a chair. An' he sleep light as a cat. Dat nigger Lemmy ain't worth a wad of number three shot in de back. Most folks see it dat way.

Across the way, a man stepped through one of the unpainted doors. The lower story had a shoe shop and a feed store. Upstairs, only vacant windows with fading badly-painted signs for a lawyer, doctor and dentist all dead now or gone away. And that single open window with its dust-colored patched curtain swinging and jerking in the morning breeze.

The man carried a shotgun cradled in his arm. For an instant, Robert thought there was something theatrical, self-conscious in the way he walked, the way he carried the gun. It was almost a relief to think so, to believe that someone else, black or white, in this miserable crossroads of a town was no more self-possessed than he was.

But the man stepped through the office door, his stride clean and unbroken until he reached a worn gun-rack on the far side of the room next to the door into the block of four cells.

—Gemman down out of Memphis, the old negro announced almost formally.

—Tom Wilson, the sheriff said, putting out his hand without looking at Robert.

His eyes were still on the street, as if its dust were the guts of fowls and he schooled to read tomorrow there. The sheriff stood over six feet, his body so carefully made that it appeared almost slender, his legs almost spindly. But Robert knew better. It was the body of an athlete: probably untrained, but balanced and kept in a kind of kinetic tension like the coil of a crossbow. For all his slender seeming, the sheriff weighed over two hundred pounds.

—Mr. Pleasance, he said, his voice soft as a boy's, apparently without fortissimo range; without the false or at least forced heartiness of most big men. —I'm afraid you wasted a trip down here. Unless you like to look over rural landscape.

Sheriff Wilson took his hand as if it were an egg he feared breaking.

—You've got a problem, don't you, Robert asked, his tone of voice not quite at ease, almost betraying that synthetic heartiness he loathed.

The sheriff smiled. —You mean Lemmy? I reckon you could call him a problem. A problem in timin, mostly.

—What do you mean?

—Well, it ain't any problem what's goin to happen to him. The problem is makin sure it happens when it ought to.

—You sound as if he were already tried and convicted.

—No, that's the problem. To keep him alive long enough to get tried and convicted. People here tend to get their sequence all messed up.

—Can you manage it, Robert asked. —Can you keep him alive?

The sheriff shrugged. —I can try. It don't seem like Lemmy was much interested in stayin alive. He kinda put me on the spot.

—Does what he did—what people say he did—make any difference?

Wilson's eyebrows raised. He glanced over at the old negro. —Well, I reckon it makes a difference to the lady he raped. And it makes a difference to most of the white men around here who feel real bad about a nigger man rapin a white woman. And it makes some kind of difference to all the colored people who've got to lie low and lose time on the job

or sweat it out in a dark shack till this business gets sorted out.

—I mean to your taking care of him.

Wilson sat down behind a cheap scarred badly varnished oak desk. —Nobody ever took a prisoner away from me, he said. —Nobody ever took anything away from me.

Robert noticed his eyes for the first time. He almost started back. They were the same peculiar eyes he had seen before: somewhere between gray and green, cold as polar stars—generally aimed behind or to one side of the one spoken to. Then suddenly snapping into focus like tiny traps, or the barrels of a shotgun brought to bear on an unsuspecting target.

—Say, the sheriff said, starting to smile. —Since you're so interested in Lemmy, I reckon you ought to meet him. Ike.

The old man shuffled to the cell-block door. He opened it with an ordinary housekey.

—Anybody could get in there, Robert said, surprised.

—If they got this far, Wilson said.

The old man stood aside. Robert could see down the corridor into the four cells. At the end, there were fresh two-by-fours nailed across what must have been a window. In the last cell, Robert saw the negro.

—Lemmy, the sheriff called out in his remarkably soft voice. —Man from Memphis come down to see you.

—Huh, came from the last cell.

—Man wants to see you're gittin taken care of.

—Huh?

The old man walked down the dark corridor, beckoning Robert to follow him. —What you want fo' breakfast.

—Reckon some mo' ham 'n eggs, a sleepy voice mumbled.

The negro in the last cell had hunched up on his cot. His

dark close-cropped head hung between his raised knees. His feet, misshapen and calloused, were on the uncovered mattress, pressed back against lean buttocks. Ropy muscles ran down his long arms, and his fingers twined beneath his thighs. From a distance, he looked like an old man.

—Lemmy, Sheriff Wilson called, still seated in the outer office.

—Yessah, the bundle of intertwined arms and legs called, its head still swaying limply between its knees.

—Tell this gentleman how come you're in there.

—On account of what I done.

—Done what?

—Done wrong to Miz Calhoun.

—Did you do like they said?

—I reckon.

Wilson was standing at the door.—Yes or no.

—Yessah.

Wilson stared at the dark huddle in the last cell. His face was impassive; his voice soft, almost compassionate.

—Lemmy, what are they goin to do to you?

As Robert watched, the bundle on the cot became animate. Its head came up. The face was that of a boy, eyes wide and bloodshot, mouth uncertain, quivering.

—They gone kill me, he moaned. His expression was composed, but tears were coursing down his cheeks.

—He's just a boy, Robert said.

—He was old enough to rape Miz Calhoun, Wilson said.

—And just old enough to die for it.

—Sheriff, Lemmy said.

—All right.

—They gone come fo' me.

—No, Lemmy. You got a trial comin.

—They gone come fo' me.

—If they come, they'll go away without you. They can wait.

—Is there anything you want, Robert asked, feeling impotent, even less self-possessed than before.

The boy looked up at him, mute, still trapped in the uncertain horror of his own imagination, in what the sheriff had made him say.

—Can I have them ham an' eggs now.

—All right, the sheriff said. —Ike, get on down to the cafe. If Inez asks you anything, tell her it's for me. She might not want to accommodate Lemmy.

They walked back into the outer office, the old negro walking on into the bright street.

—Well, the sheriff said, his eyes following the old man as he shambled down the boardwalk.

Robert said nothing. It was as if he had stepped into some other universe a lot like his own but different enough to be terrifying: a universe in which the ritual of justice, the plausible fictions of innocence and guilt, truth or falsehood were transposed or annihilated altogether.

The sheriff stretched out in his ancient swivel chair, wincing as it squealed under him. He wore no pistol belt, and his uniform was khaki shirt and pants and a medium-brimmed Stetson. He watched Robert now, his eyes curious, almost friendly.

—You could of sat right there under the fan in the press room and wrote this story, couldn't you?

Robert shrugged. —I guess so, he admitted. —I don't know what I expected. I'm not even sure what I've seen.

—You ain't seen much, Wilson told him. —Because I mean for there not be anything to see. No news is good news. Or

maybe you could say good news ain't no news. If it goes the way I mean for it to, you ain't gonna have enough to fill the space under a cross-word puzzle.

Robert smiled. —I hope it works out that way. I don't want anything to write about.

—You go along now, Wilson said. —You tell Sam Moseley to give you that room that looks out over the street. You can see the river if you kind of stretch your neck.

—You don't expect any trouble this afternoon?

—I don't expect any then or later. Anyhow, whoever heard of a lynch-mob in the daylight?

—Maybe there won't be but one or two.

The sheriff smiled. —I don't reckon one or two would come. You go along. I'll see you about suppertime.

Robert started for the door. He had almost reached it when a man in overalls pushed past him, heading for the sheriff's desk. Robert almost fell moving out of the way.

—You sent that nigger Ike down to Inez's place for food, the man said. His voice was cold, level.

Wilson smiled up at him, his hands folded on the desk.

—That's what a cafe is for, Wilson said.

—We don't feed nigger rapists, the man answered, his words covering Wilson's.

—If you want that black sonofabitch fed, you can cook for him.

—Rupert, the sheriff told him, —watch your mouth. I ordered a plate of ham and eggs. I didn't rape nobody. And you best remember I ain't a nigger.

Robert watched the man's face. It looked like a slab of tan marble with whiskers unaccountably sprouting from the bottom of it. But the eyes were those same predictable agates without expression or warmth. Like Wilson's, like the man's

on the train. Even the color was the same. Then Robert recognized him. It was the man in the cafe. The man who had come in for coffee.

For a moment the office was silent. Robert could hear two men talking as they passed in the street.

—Did you hear?

—Sure I heard. My wife called old man Fowler whenever she heard. That goddamned Wally Post.

—If that sonofabitch didn't know how to fly, they ought not to of let him.

—Jesus, don't you know it was cold and lonesome up there?

—Terrible place to die.

—Alone.

The big man in overalls shifted his weight as if he were considering vaulting over the sheriff's desk.

—It might be a good idea for you to come down to the cafe for a sandwich and a piece of pie tonight. On the house.

Wilson's smile was brittle. —That's nice of you. Did you have some entertainment in mind?

—What?

—Maybe a floorshow featurin the Gayoso Girls, Earl Lively and his Country Cousins, and a nigger soaked in kerosene and lit up on the courthouse lawn for a grand finale.

The man hitched his overalls. —That nigger is gonna die, he said, his voice still controlled, matter of fact.

—In my time, Wilson said. —Not yours.

—We'll see about whose time.

—Rupert Dee, the sheriff said, —you got maybe twenty or thirty years of livin to get through, with any luck. You got a saw mill, and you got Inez and that cafe. You hunt when it pleases you. You drink when it don't. You scratch or lay still

all accordin to how you feel. You done grabbed the brass ring, boy. Ain't all that a hell of a trade for one worthless nigger who's got a rope around his neck already.

—That rope's two days and some hours late.

—That ain't for you to say. It takes you and eleven others.

—I can get thirty over here inside ten minutes.

—You can get ten of 'em killed thirty seconds later.

The big man shrugged. —Think about that sandwich. Inez has got some good homebaked pie. About ten-thirty. Folks would respect you.

Wilson was rising, moving toward the window from which he could see the old negro, Ike, returning slowly, empty-handed.

—And not a goddamned order of ham and eggs in the house, huh?

The big man stepped to the door, staring at Robert as he passed, his eyes revealing nothing.

—Folks would appreciate it, he told Wilson as he stepped into the street.

The sheriff grinned at Robert. —Didn't I tell you to get over to the hotel? Your eyes look like a couple of holes pissed in a snowbank. Go along now.

V

When he awoke, the sun was just down, and his room was bathed in soft beige light falling through tattered shades. He felt strangely rested, filled with new strength, almost optimistic. As if the shards of death and foreboding in Wilson's office had vanished with the sun. Robert stretched on the brass-framed bed. He felt the power in his legs and arms. It was luxurious to extend his muscles and sinews. He was hun-

gry suddenly, and realized he had eaten nothing since the night before on the train.

Downstairs he passed the indifferent clerk hunched over his cigars and tobacco, yesterday's Memphis and Jackson papers, and last month's *Colliers* and *Liberty*. The clerk was talking to a middle-aged woman with steel-rimmed spectacles, her hair done up in a bun as if she were a conscious parody of an old maid school teacher. The woman was talking softly in a listless defeated monotone as if she were telling the clerk of her own death sentence.

—They always come in threes. Did you ever see it fail?

—No ma'am, the clerk nodded, his own spectacles nodding in time with hers, his lank gray hair pushed forward in a hopeless and oily pompadour. —No ma'am. I never did.

—First Miz Calhoun and that nigra savage, and now this. We'll be in a war before the week's out. Unless somebody takes a hand.

—Unless God takes a hand, the clerk mumbled as if he had small hope of it.

—I never missed him on the radio, the woman said.

—I missed Major Bowes sometimes, the clerk told her, —but I never did miss him.

—To have all them jokes and that laughter gone.

—Dead cold and alone without a soul to help, the clerk intoned.

Robert reached the long narrow porch of the hotel and stared down the street. Most of the shops and stores were closed. Only one wagon and a battered car or two were still parked in the street. A bread truck from out of town, the kind that delivered from Jackson or Meridian to the outlying towns was parked and empty near the porch.

—A day in this place is as ten thousand years, Robert heard someone say. —Ain't that the solemn truth?

He knew the voice as if it were his own, or that of a friend. For no reason he could imagine, cold sweat came suddenly to his forehead, his shoulders, at the small of his back. Not fear, or even a return of that earlier foreboding so much as some kind of stark, almost sensuous anticipation.

—They already got you jumpy, and it ain't a shot been fired or a voice raised, Mr. Gone said, almost at Robert's elbow.

Mr. Gone's chair was tilted back against the clapboard side of the hotel. His yellow and black hound's tooth jacket was open. His belly pushed his vest outwards, and a gold watch-chain lay across the expanse. He held a paperboard fan with a reed handle, waving it to and fro, stirring the heavy air. On one side was a four-color lithographed picture of Jesus Suffering the Little Children. The other side had an advertisement for the Mills and Marchant Funeral Home of Vicksburg.

—The heat's broke now. In an hour or two, it'll be fit to live hereabouts, Mr. Gone said easily.

Robert stared at him. —What are you doing here? You were gone when I woke up this morning on the train. How did you...?

Mr. Gone smiled broadly. In the diminishing light, his eyes were the color of a tiger's. They held Robert's almost hypnotically.

—I'm gone in the mornin, gone at night, he laughed.

He sang a few bars of the old tune softly. —*I travel in the mountains, and in the valleys...*

Robert pulled up a chair and sat beside Mr. Gone. After a moment, he put his feet upon the porch railing, a bit self-consciously.

—*I travel cold, then I travel hungry*, Mr. Gone sang into the dusk.

—The sheriff, Robert began, but Mr. Gone cut him off.

—I got by to see him this afternoon. It wearies me to see a good man sweatin.

—That negro . . .

—Is a dead man. And knows it. And already give up prayin for life. He's in there now singin real low about the riverside and askin his crucified savior to make it quick and easy and not to let it be hurtful and drawed out. He just wants a sweet chariot.

—Do you think the sheriff . . .

—I know Tom Wilson real good, Mr. Gone said. —If that nigger is meant to have trial, Tom'll see him through it.

—Meant to?

—Man proposes, Mr. Gone sighed.

—A man came in while I was there. He told the sheriff to take a walk tonight.

Mr. Gone smiled. —Waste of time. Like fartin into a whirlwind. Wilson walks his own way, and if a man crosses him, he better give his soul to God. Cause his ass is Tom Wilson's.

—You think the sheriff will hold things together, Robert asked, pulling his feet down, edging to the front of his chair.

Mr. Gone scratched his armpit and pulled a cigar from some hidden pocket. It was a stogie, and when he had bitten and lit it, his profile looked more like that of a Wall-Street broker than a backwoods peddler of Bibles.

—I met Tom's grandfather one time, Mr. Gone told him. —Old fella was broke down with the years. Terrible decrepit. But under all that white hair and eyebrows, behind that old woman's voice, there was the left-overs of some godawful fine man. He was with Forrest all through western Tennessee. He ended up at Vicksburg and got hit real bad there. One leg with two old fifty-calibre balls in it. The day of the sur-

render he drug himself to a Yankee medical post and asked for help, but some Union colonel told him to haul his rebel ass, that they were taking care of Northern soldiers and Southern niggers, and he wasn't either one.

Mr. Gone pulled on his cigar. The darkness was almost full now, and a few lights were blinking on up and down the street.

—Which was the biggest mistake that Yankee colonel ever made. Or at least a bigger one than it turned out he could afford. Because later some doctor had to take Slim Wilson's leg off and he told Slim that leg would of been all right if he'd got it treated soon enough. So three years later to the day he stood out in front of a restaurant in a fine part of Boston on a home-made wooden leg with a Remington army pistol in his hand till he saw this feller, this prominent banker, come walkin out on two good legs. What for? To walk up and call out his name—Slim's—to tell that Boston banker what it was for, and then to empty that cap-and-ball revolver into the banker's belly before he could hit the pavement. All that happened on July fourth, the third anniversary of Vicksburg's fall.

—But why?

Mr. Gone grimaced. —You're a fine boy, but dull. That banker with six balls in his belly had been a colonel three years earlier at Vicksburg. It was just squarin up accounts. Though I'll admit six in the belly is kind of overpayment for two in the leg, even if the leg was gone. But old Slim said no sonofabitch livin could claim to of took anythin away from him. None livin.

—Good God, Robert said. —Right out of your Old Testament.

Mr. Gone's eyebrows arched. —It may not be the fashion

like Mr. Darwin, but that old book holds the heart. Men know themselves in it. It ain't but only God's word.

Robert shook his head. —That old man . . .

—He's dead now, Mr. Gone said shortly, and that murder is seventy years behind us. But you asked if Tom Wilson will hold things together here. I don't know. But he's Slim's boy. If he don't keep things together, I reckon he'll punish the pieces. How about a little supper?

They walked down the quiet street. The heat had dissipated as Mr. Gone predicted, and a light breeze, like that of the morning, fanned across them. They stopped in front of the cafe.

—It ain't like eatin food, but it's about all they got around here, Mr. Gone said.

—But the man at the sheriff's office. His wife owns this place.

—Well, come on in and mix, Mr. Gone said. —If it comes to you writin about these folks, you ought to at least have a good look at 'em.

Robert hesitated, but there was no place else. They went in and found one of the two booths empty. There were perhaps a dozen people at tables and along the counter. Robert could hear a man with small pointed ears talking to another who wolfed down chili with a tablespoon.

—Sonofabitch Wally Post.

—Uughh, the chili-eater mumbled, reaching for free crackers.

—Man's got a right to kill his own ass.

—Ughff.

—Ain't got no right carryin innocent people down to hell with him. That cold, that ice.

—Yeah, the chili man muttered.

—They say it's dark all night and day up there.

There were no more crackers. The chili bowl was empty.

—You can't turn nowhere but what you see the truth of it: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Mr. Gone had taken off his coat and rolled his shirtsleeves. He tucked the napkin into his vest. He had ordered ham and eggs and grits for Robert and himself.

—That man whose wife owns this place, Robert began. —He looks mean. He looks like he'd do anything.

—Sure, Mr. Gone said. —Anythin he could get by with. That's always the big question. What can you put past other folks. What will they sit still for? What can you get 'em to go along with?

—Like lynching?

—Or buildin Standard Oil, Mr. Gone said. —Or stealin the Panama Canal, or playin funny games with the stock market.

—Lynching is different, Robert protested.

—Sure, Mr. Gone said. —It's like a big ugly boil. You can tell the blood's bad right off. Then there's syphilis. Lots of times you can't tell a woman's got it till you've got it too. You're right about old Rupert though. He's a bad actor. His old man and his grandfather both ended up getting shot. Seems like none of 'em want blood inside a man where it belongs.

Robert shivered as a waitress set their orders on the table. The woman he had seen that morning was not in the place.

—That nigger, Mr. Gone breathed, as if he bore a wearisome burden. —That goddamned crazy nigger.

—What do you mean, Robert said around a mouthful of unfamiliar grits.

Mr. Gone chewed his ham and shook his head. —For five minutes with a poor brokedown widow lady who probably

thought for sure she'd suffered that particular indignity for the last time, old Lemmy has set his foot on the way of the cross. And it's God's own best guess whether he's gonna get crucified in the prescribed manner or in some fancy irregular way. And even whether he's goin by himself or get somebody else nailed up too. It don't make a lick of sense.

—No, Robert said eagerly, dropping his fork. —It doesn't. Why can't these people see that?

Mr. Gone wiped his plate with a slice of toast. —I don't know you and I mean the same thing. I ain't especially worried about Lemmy's hide. I don't see I got to worry more about any hide than the man inside it does. I'm thinkin of the botheration.

—Justice, Robert began.

—Sorry, Mr. Gone cut him off. —It ain't my field. Human justice is folly in the sight of the Lord. Your righteousness and mine are filthy rags. Between corruption and what passes for virtue amongst men is a distance too small to measure.

—That's not so. Justice is everything, Robert shot back.

—Hume didn't think so. Remember what he said? If you went out resolved to give a beatin to the wicked and a good meal to the virtuous, you'd find nobody worth the cost of either. And Meredith: Expediency is man's wisdom. Doin right is God's.

Robert stared at him bewildered. —But, he began, —we've gone beyond that. We know what's right. We...

—You mean Yankees, I expect, Mr. Gone said dryly. —You all are big for progress.

—Yes, Robert said defensively. —Yes. We're not in the caves anymore. We don't believe that colored people...

—Progress is the hypocrisy which refines the vices, Mr. Gone quoted, staring at a ceiling fan as it turned futilely,

slashing the unresisting air. —I forgot who said that. He must have spent a vacation in New York.

—That's not . . .

—Your progress and your knowledge and your civilization are vanity, Mr. Gone said kindly, as if Robert were a dull child. —What you believe or don't believe about caves and colored people don't make any difference. You're sittin fifty yards from a poor nigger who done wrong and has to pay one way or the other. And not ten feet from some of the folks who may be decidin which it'll be. Or who may have already decided. Which is to say nothin but what any fool with eyes and a care for his own hide knows right from the cradle: every last one of us is a victim. Condemned. And guilty, too. There ain't but one hope.

Robert looked across at him. —Mercy of the court, Mr. Gone said. —If God decides, he just might commute ten years of cancer to an airplane crash.

Robert shook his head. Not in negation or even in qualified disagreement, but in weary confusion. —I don't know, Robert said. —It's like trying to go through college in two days. None of this means anything to me. I never came across anything like this before. I just don't understand.

—That's right, Mr. Gone said kindly. —You don't. Like me wakin up in them Georgia woods with nothin but an old nigger to show me my way. But you're on your way. Beginn of wisdom is to feel the lack of it. Now just keep your eyes open.

They paid the waitress who studied their clothes and faces casually. Outside, in the street, it was beginning to turn cool, almost chill. Mr. Gone put his coat on, watching an old car or two that drifted coughing exhaust fumes as they moved down the street. Mr. Gone called Robert's attention to them.

—Five and six men in each car, he said slowly. —And all of 'em starin straight ahead like kids in school who threw spitballs. Tryin to look on their good behavior. Tom Wilson's got him some trouble. I was hopin he might just bull through. Fond hope.

As Mr. Gone talked, a stooped negro moved from the street and stopped beside him. Robert jerked about, his nerves like puppet-wires again. It was Ike, and he had materialized out of the darkness as if he were part of it, as if the color of his skin were some occult endorsement that permitted him instantaneous passage through the medium of night and shadow.

—Mr. Able Gone, he said, as if the name were part of a minor incantation. Mr. Gone did not look at him, but fumbled in his coat pocket for a cigar. Still starin into the ill-lighted street, he scratched a match across the sole of his shoe and drew deeply on the cigar.

—That's right, he said. —I reckoned Tom would have you all wrapped up tonight, Ike.

—Can't wrop me up, the old man said, standing clear of the soft yellow light that fell like mist through the cafe's screen door. —Dis business gone too far. It ain't no way to cover nobody up.

—Poor naked wretches, Mr. Gone sighed, pulling on his cigar again.

—Who wretched, Ike asked quickly, as if the phrase offended him.

—All of us, Mr. Gone told him, touching his shoulder. —Every one of us. The whole shebang. I expect Tom will be wantin to see us.

—If you ain't got no better way to spend de evenin, Ike said. —Dat was what he told me to say.

—Not a way in the world, huh boy, Mr. Gone said, turning to Robert.

—No. Yes, that's right, Robert said, distracted by a passing car full of men. It was one of the same cars that had passed a few moments before.

—That's right, Mr. Gone repeated, following his eyes. —They're patrollin the street. God knows what they expect.

—Youall comin, Ike asked, moving off the sidewalk, vanishing again into the darkness.

Sheriff Wilson opened the door for them. He took Mr. Gone's hand. —You got a testament with you, he grinned.

—Old and new, Mr. Gone said. —You know the text. For they shall be satisfied.

Wilson shook hands with Robert and locked the door behind Ike. —I don't know, he told Mr. Gone. —Justice is a mouthful of air. I'll settle for peace.

Mr. Gone studied him without smiling, but his gray-green eyes were bright and certain.

—In that case, he said.—you can send Ike out to flag down one of them cars that keep passin. And go on over to Inez's place for a sandwich.

Robert looked quickly at Wilson. Some instinct told him that if he had said those words to the sheriff, he would be stretched on the floor now, his jaw bent or broken.

But Wilson was smiling. Ruefully and without humor, but smiling nonetheless, and regarding Able Gone with what, for him, passed as an expression of understanding, of fondness.

—Just a manner of speaking, he said finally. —You know just when to poke, don't you?

—A gift, Mr. Gone smiled, his arm circling Wilson's

shoulders. —And now what do you reckon to do with that poor dead nigger in back?

—Save him for the ceremony, the sheriff said. —Get him over to Meridian or some town with a jail you can't break with a sardine key. It ain't no good waitin here. I thought I could bull 'em, but that's gone sour. Did Ike tell you?

—Tell what?

—Mrs. Calhoun went plain out of her head this afternoon. Her son-in-law had to carry her over to the hospital.

—Too much time to think on it, Mr. Gone said sadly. —Nothin to take her mind off it. Where do we go first?

—I need a car, the sheriff said. —Mine wouldn't make the corner.

—Can you borrow?

—Wouldn't dare try. Who can you borrow a car from to carry a nigger rapist out of harm's way?

—Wouldn't be much of a list, I guess.

Robert stepped close to the desk. —We could steal one. There was a truck down by the hotel. A bread truck, a panel truck with some bread company's name on it.

—Bread truck, Mr. Gone laughed. —Sure, Tom. You want it?

—I guess. We ain't got time to sit around swappin ideas.

—Being a commercial truck ought to help, Robert put in.

—Maybe, Mr. Gone said. —It could go half a dozen ways, and there ain't a pair of eyes on God's earth can see what's best from here. Come on.

Wilson unlocked the door. Ike started out after Robert and Mr. Gone. The sheriff caught him by his shirt collar. —You hold up. I've been tellin you to go home for two days. This time I goddamn well mean it. You reckon those sonsofbitches

are gonna care which or how many niggers they get once it starts rolling?

Ike stared at him. —You reckon I care what dat white trash is up to? Ain't we got a job to do?

—*I* got a job, Wilson told him roughly. —Sometimes you forget you're a nigger, old man. I want you home and out of the way. I'll see you tomorrow. On time for a change.

Ike's shoulders sagged. As he stepped off the walk and into an alley close by, he did not turn to see Wilson's expression.

—That's hard, Mr. Gone said quietly. —That's the hardest thing so far.

—Shut up, and get that truck, the sheriff barked at him, slamming the door of the office and locking it.

—Want to talk about justice on the way, Mr. Gone asked Robert slyly.

—No, Robert said, his belly churning, feeling an unutterable sadness flow over him like dark water. —No I just want that truck.

VI

Mr. Gone and Robert were in the cab of the truck. The cafe and the hotel porch were empty now, and they had hunched down in the seat when one of the ubiquitous quiet cars had gone by, its occupants squinting up and down the street.

Mr. Gone twisted the steering wheel sharply. Robert had not seen him move so rapidly and surely before. He heard a metallic crack.

—Broke the steerin-lock first time out. That's good luck. Now.

He plucked a fifty-cent piece out of his pocket and frowned at it. —Got a quarter, he asked Robert.

Robert fumbled in his trousers and handed him one.

—Good, Mr. Gone said. —Half's too big. I got to touch two of these points. If I get the third, it'll shock hell out of me.

He placed the coin below the dashboard and carefully positioned it with his fingers. Then he stepped on the starter. The engine coughed alive, and Mr. Gone gunned it softly.

—Put your hand under here. Right over mine. See you don't let that coin shift.

As Robert took it, Mr. Gone put the truck in gear and moved off, making a fast shallow U-turn and heading for the sheriff's office.

—So far, so good, he breathed. There was no tension or nervousness in his voice. His face still bore that inalterable expression of cool and disinterested intelligence that Robert had seen on the train. His hands rested lightly on the steering wheel.

—We'll get us a piece of friction tape in the office. You don't want to hold that quarter all the way to Meridian. Especially if we get to goin fast and makin corners.

—I will if I have to, Robert said, and immediately wished he had said nothing.

—Sure, Mr. Gone said, —we all got to do our bit.

Wilson was waiting in his office. He had Lemmy out of the cell and handcuffed. The boy sat next to his desk, slumped over, head still between his knees as if he had been transported instantaneously from the cot in his cell. Wilson was loading a .45 automatic.

—Can't carry my shotgun. I might blow us all to hell tryin to swing it out the window. I hate a pistol. I'd just as soon use a broken bottle.

—You should of told us to bring a carton of Nehi when we went for the truck, Mr. Gone grinned, taking a roll of tape out of the desk and stepping outside quickly. —We got to

hurry before one of them cars comes by.

Wilson had Lemmy on his feet. He was tall, Robert noticed, and slender to the point of emaciation. His eyes were blood-shot, still filled with moisture. There was no expression in his face, unless total and unrelieved terror which spread from him like an odor is a kind of expression. He watched Wilson finish with the pistol and jam it into his belt.

—Now Lemmy, I'm takin you to Meridian. They got a big new jail there, and it'll be all right till you get your trial. You understand?

—Yessuh.

Wilson took the boy's arm and started toward the door as Mr. Gone came in.

—And I don't want any trouble out of you, boy. I want you to sit still and behave. I got enough trouble already for four or five men.

—Nosuh.

—I'm mad with you for doin wrong to that old lady, and I don't want you actin silly and tryin to get loose. You hear?

—Mr. Wilson, I ain't gonna try nothin, Lemmy said. —I'm studyin on what I done. I know you mean right.

—I can maybe get you a week or a month if you behave.

—Yessuh.

—It's all fixed, Mr. Gone said. —We're ready to travel.

—Not you, the sheriff said. —I want you to stay here. Move around, make some noise. If they come in, you were just waitin for me. It might give us ten minutes.

Mr. Gone studied Wilson's face. —Who'll drive?

—This boy, the sheriff said, pointing to Robert. —Give him somethin special to write up.

—I'll do it, Robert said quickly.

Mr. Gone paused, his eyes focussed past Wilson's shoulder

as if on the far wall there was writing in some indecipherable script. As he looked back at the sheriff, Robert thought he shivered. But the breeze that came in through the partly open door was warm and pleasant. —All right, Mr. Gone said, almost in a whisper, seating himself heavily in the chair Lemmy had vacated. —The Lord make his face to shine on you.

—An' gimme peace, Lemmy said automatically.

Outside the street was deserted. There was one weak light on the porch of the hotel, and a few in Inez's cafe. Wilson pushed Lemmy into the truck. —You'll be in the middle. Sit still.

Robert got behind the wheel. —If you want to kill the engine, let out the clutch in gear and hit the brake, he heard Mr. Gone call softly as they pulled away.

Robert remembered afterward thinking as the bread truck moved off that perhaps the heat had broken a little, that the drive to Meridian would be cool, and that he would be able to relax, to put into some kind of perspective what he had learned in a single day. The air that streamed through the window, soothing his face, was scented with the odor of late summer flowers. They grew in the large quiet shaded yards, along fences—even in the weed-strewn vacant lots. He did not know their names or even what they looked like. He thought: Tomorrow, when we get back, I'll come and find them, see if they smell as wonderful in the light of day.

They made it almost to the end of the street, almost to the crossroads where the depot lay in shadow, where roads vanished in the darkness bearing northwest and southeast, northeast and south. But as they reached the junction, an old Ford auto cut in front of them, and another car pulled just behind it to form a vee in which the truck was trapped. Robert's eyes followed the truck headlights, locked on the springing

chrome figure of a greyhound on the hood of the Ford. He heard voices loud and angry, saw at the edge of his vision smears of color and motion and light. Saw then, as his eyes broke away from the static leaping figure on the car's hood, Wilson's .45 large enough to fill the whole truck moving upward from his belt and then, seemingly in slow motion downward to the open window. Robert heard a shout and then its report. Not once or twice but over and over again, a terrible hammer blasting away all the tense hours past and the gaudy abstractions that had filled them. Over and over the automatic crashed, and at last Robert saw the blurs of motion and color eddy and organize themselves into men in work shirts and straw hats and one enormous figure in faded blue overalls whose filthy shirt was already bright with blood, but who neither fell nor even slowed up in his dash for the truck, who rather ran across the patch of dusty street firing his own pistol with both hands, becoming even larger, moving closer in that same inexorable and incomprehensible slow motion, clumsy and uncoordinated. Behind him more men came, one or perhaps two falling backward, jerked off their feet by the thunderous and continual clap of Wilson's pistol, the rest closing on the truck at some insane velocity between the speed of light and total stasis, while Robert tried without volition or success to grasp, to place a high-pitched sound that pierced his head like the keening of a plane in irreversible nose-dive.

Then the man in overalls, his face a paste of blood and sweat and dust, reached the truck and fired one final shot before he fell against the door with as much force as if he had been another vehicle, some kind of machine himself rather than flesh and blood.

Wilson was battered backward against Lemmy, and Robert

saw the windshield shatter into a bright web of reflections as the bullet ricocheted through the sheriff's body.

—Goddamnit, Wilson said conversationally, without heat or excitement as he tried to sit upright.

Lemmy's manacled hands were on his shirt. Wilson shrugged him off. —Goddamnit, he said, trying to aim the pistol out the window again, —ain't I told you to behave, Lemmy?

By then others were almost at the truck. One held a kerosene can in one hand, a lighted torch of pine wrapped with rag in the other. Behind him another held a coil of barbed wire and one of the long jagged knives used to scale and gut fish.

—. . . black sonofabitch, one was screaming as he ran, seemingly oblivious of Wilson's unsteady gun. —Goddamnit, the sheriff said one last time.

But now Lemmy had seen the men and what they were carrying. —Aw Christ Jesus, Mr. Wilson, he cried. —Aw Christ Jesus.

Wilson's head turned slowly, his own eyes bright and moist as Lemmy's but bereft of any fear at all. He looked into the boy's face, touched his shackled clutching hands with his own free one.

—Yes, Wilson said with immeasurable care. —Sure, that's it.

And as Robert watched, watched Wilson's face and that of the negro boy whose thin taut body was pressed against his own, the sheriff turned his pistol from the window and brought it around in that same parody of motion that Robert would always believe took so long that it must have been, had to have been, somehow outside of time while the men in workshirts with their ugly implements were frozen into immobility.

Even as the pistol found its new focus, as Wilson's forehead creased with effort, with concentration, Robert saw his eyes meet Lemmy's, saw without belief or even detachable, separate emotion, the negro boy's eyes close with those of the sheriff, his hands come to rest on Wilson's chest, his head move closer still. Until in that last portion of an instant, still outside, beyond time, Robert saw pass between them not the look of a victim and an executioner, but that of a son claiming his father's protection. Then the pistol thundered one more time.

Even then, and for a moment longer, Robert felt that strange inchoate separateness, detachment, that held him together. But Lemmy's body, pushed violently against him by the force of the shot, turned slowly, and the boy's ruined face seemed to dip inch by inch until it rested, wet and gleaming, against his shoulder. Wilson was lying slumped on his side of the seat. His eyes were still open, his face shining. Only the slackness of his lips, the loose uncontrolled attitude of his pistol hand from which the automatic had slipped, was different. But those were differences enough.

By then they were wrenching open the truck's doors. By then those still standing were trying to drag Wilson's body out of the car to get to Lemmy; dragging Robert from behind the wheel despite that continuing high-pitched sound that Robert recognized finally and without interest as his own voice raised not in terror but in the sudden total and immitigable knowledge of what spiritual pain, bereavement, really mean.

As they pulled him out, Robert's foot released the clutch, and the truck bounded forward smashing into the Ford automobile. Robert felt hands fall away as he landed rolling in the dusty street.

—Dead, he heard someone howl. —Both of 'em. The nigger's dead.

—Gimme some light, another voice shrilled. —I lost hold of that Yankee . . .

But a third voice was screaming in agony, and another was crying for help. —Goddamned truck pinned Tobin. For Jesus' sake gimme light over here.

And Robert had rolled until he felt the raised edge of the board sidewalk under his hands. Then he was on his feet running. Not toward the sheriff's office or the depot, but away from the tangled cars where men still howled like animals, and sudden flames had begun to crease the darkness from a can of spilled kerosene.

He was thinking nothing and feeling only the warm humid night air flowing past his running body—still somehow without fear (except that animal withdrawal of the body that the mind and brain and soul can only partially contain, and that only sometimes), without concern. Only the drumming sound of his feet on the heat-softened pavement reached that part of him still unshorted, still capable of any feeling at all. He ran on toward, into, the darkness as if it were light.

Until, hundreds of yards beyond sight of the work-shirted men, almost beyond the sound of their voices, he tripped, sprawled headlong and fell again. This time into cool dew-moistened grass. He realized quizzically that his mouth was involuntarily agape, that he was gasping like a catfish tossed carelessly on the bank. He was almost amused by the hollow rasping sigh of his breath, by the ponderous and growing ache in his head. His hands moved in the grass, and he remembered afterward thinking that this patch of grass and

this long dismembered night was as good a place, as favorable a time to die as any he was likely ever to find. Then a hand touched his heaving shoulder.

—Not yet, Mr. Gone was saying softly, —not yet.

Robert rolled onto his back, fists doubled, ready to permit the body whatever absurd defense it might make against barbed-wire, gut-knives, kerosene.

—They ain't sorted themselves out yet, Mr. Gone went on as Robert's hands fell to the grass again. —We got five or ten minutes to get travellin.

They walked for what seemed like hours. Mr. Gone's pace was hard. He seemed to move as well in darkness as in light, and he walked with a smooth rolling gait that kept Robert breathing shallow and fast. They moved through fields, Robert stumbling across planted rows. There were low hills and steep-sided gullies that Mr. Gone skirted or moved down and across effortlessly. They paused at last. Robert tried to tell him, tried to gather wind enough to tell him.

—Wilson. He shot . . .

—We'll hit Howard's Junction in another thirty minutes if we stomp down on it.

—When they got us, he turned around and shot . . .

—The train goes about a mile to the west. We can flag down that 1:55 out of Jackson. I know the boys in the cab. One of 'em is a Gideon. We done business together. You'll eat breakfast in Memphis. That is, if you mean to stop in Memphis long enough for breakfast.

—He shot the boy. He knew what those lunatics were up to, and he took the boy with . . .

Mr. Gone smiled in the gloom. Robert could see his white teeth, the dark shadowed caverns of his eyes.

—Now you're comin at all of it from the other way, Mr. Gone said patiently.

—He cared what happened. He did everything he knew to do, and then there was that one more thing . . .

Mr. Gone chuckled. The sound was low and almost obscene, Robert thought. It was the understated overcontrolled laughter of a man who recalls an unspeakably filthy story and laughs before the telling of it in anticipation, savoring in advance its effect upon hearers.

—There ain't no learnin you, Mr. Gone said. —When you come here, you wondered if Wilson would end up strollin down for a cup of coffee when it looked like those boys meant business. Now you talk like he was Christ Jesus risin up off the mount with that poor fuddled nigger Lemmy Fuller under one arm. Eyes that see not; ears that hear not.

—What, Robert began.

—I know what happened. I knew Tom Wilson, and I knew there wasn't fifty men in Mississippi could take a mustard seed away from him, much less a bound-over nigger.

—It wasn't that, Robert said. —He . . .

Mr. Gone shrugged and got to his feet. In the darkness Robert could not make out his face. —It wasn't anything you or I can say, can spit out on a table and take a look at. Maybe he felt sorry for that boy. Surely he was mad about it all goin wrong on account of that sonofabitch who drove the bread truck findin it missin and sendin word to the others. But for a fact, Tom Wilson never let go of nothin. He come from a family that never learned to let go, and never forgot how to hold. It come with farmin thin soil and squeezin dimes for a hundred years and buildin with cast-off lumber and bricks from chimneys left after Yankees got done burnin.

What do you say maybe he was just holdin on in the only way left?

—No, Robert almost shouted. —No, that's a lie. I saw him. I know . . .

Mr. Gone helped him to his feet. —Know, he said loudly, as if he were addressing a jury, a congregation. —We don't either of us know anything. God's wisdom is to do right, remember? And remember what ours is?

—I know, Robert said again, less strongly, a note almost of pleading, desperation in his voice.

—Or maybe after all it was justice, Mr. Gone said. —Maybe Wilson, knowing the verdict as well as you or I, was afraid that boy would cut and run and somehow or other make it. Maybe you witnessed a law officer performin his painful duty under tryin circumstances.

They were walking again, and Robert had no breath to answer. He shook his head, his eyes still on the ground.

—But for the love of God, Mr. Gone was saying, as if to himself, his voice moderated now. —Is that likely? In nineteen and thirty-five? In Wildwood, Mississippi?

The railroad track ran like an enormous glistening snail-path through the untenanted pine-woods. They stood silent, watching, as from an immeasurable distance the firefly lamp of the train closed with them. Mr. Gone took out his watch and struck a match. —Seven minutes behind. We got more luck than mortal men deserve.

—Ain't that so, he said, looking at Robert.

The train had stopped and Mr. Gone had spoken to the whey-faced fireman who passed his words to the engineer.

—He can pay his fare to the conductor, the fireman called down. —But for Jesus' sake hurry up. We got ten minutes to make up.

At the coach, Robert had started up the hastily lowered steps before he realized Mr. Gone was not following him.

—Aren't you . . . ?

—I got sample-cases back there and a territory to cover, Mr. Gone smiled.

—But those men . . . You . . .

—Is a panther safe in the jungle?

—If . . . If I was still going to be a newspaper man after this, if I could write it all down . . .

—Publish it not in the streets of Askelon, Mr. Gone said.

—It ain't a new story anyway. The world is full of it, whatever you take it to mean.

—But what, Robert asked him, —how should I . . .

—Nothing, Mr. Gone called, stepping back from the train which even then was beginning almost imperceptibly to move. —Most likely nothin. A killin. Two killins. Something for a tired coroner and some farmers and shopkeepers to sort out. Two graves in different cemeteries—not countin those others Wilson carried along.

The train was picking up speed, and Mr. Gone walked slowly along the right-of-way at first. —It didn't mean anything. You'll see that later. It didn't mean anything.

—I'll see that later, Robert repeated, as if he were hypnotized.

—You'll see, Mr. Gone called as the train's motion outpaced him. —You'll see.

And something more which Robert could not hear for the high and distant moaning of the train's whistle as it found its speed and headed toward Memphis while Robert stared backward, his cheek pressed against the chill metal side of the car watching Mr. Gone rapidly grow smaller, more shadowy, waving what looked like a red bandana or handker-

chief, withering, diminishing, until he and the dark woods behind him were one indistinguishable blur in the humid night.

VII

The news-room was chaos, and Robert pushed between close-ranked desks to the hollow circle in which the State Editor sat, tossing copy to headwriters and rewrite men. He looked up as Robert neared him.

—Got back okay, he said. —Come on, I got enough to keep you busy for a week. We got a special page to lay out.

He turned to one of his men. —Anything hot?

—They figure to bring 'em out tomorrow, AP says.

—Okay. Box it on page one.

—Listen, Robert broke in, —let me have one of the rewrite men. I want to tell him . . .

The State Editor stared up at him uncomprehendingly. —Tell him what?

—What happened in Wildwood, what you sent me down to Mississippi about. You never heard . . .

—For Christ's sake forget it, the State Editor said. —We've got more copy than we can use. Don't they have radios down there? Didn't you hear?

—Hear, Robert repeated woodenly.

The State Editor reached for fresh copy in his basket. —Yesterday, he said, —Will Rogers was killed in Alaska. The whole country is crying.

WHITE HORSES

BY ROBERT CLAYTON CASTO

I saw the white horses in fields all together,
I never together white horses have seen.
Their forelocks were glistening with countries of dapples,
their eyes with a kindness that shone on the green.

I saw they were travelers upon the brisk meadows
and made all the grass like a heavenly road.
Why, even the dust came alive with a coping
of dewy quick lawn like the beard of a god.

And then from the hillocks they raised their small voices,
soft voices, the choicest the air could select,
and sang in a music that opened the suburbs
the song of the shackles and sorrows of men:

“No man is alive but is cruel to his brother,
“no neighbor to man but is his enemy,
“no brother is brother but wants to be other,
“no clansman in household but wants to be free.”

White horses, white horses! in fields all together,
which nibble on grasses in green company,
the children of angels aloft on the headlands,
graze on my hard heart, for I want to be free!

THE PRESENT COURSE OF SOUTHERN FICTION: *EVERYNEGRO* AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES

BY THOMAS H. LANDESS

I

IF one believes in Hegel, the so-called Southern Renaissance was probably ending about the time that literary historians first became aware of such a phenomenon. Certainly it is now a commonplace to observe that the golden years are over, that Faulkner is dead, and that other giants of an earlier era are either no longer writing or else have turned to literary criticism, a perfect Hegelian admission of creative senility. One can point to exceptions, of course, but according to the prophets of doom these only prove the rule; and the younger generation cannot keep the flame alive.

There is a certain veneer of truth to this line of argument. Much of the ground which can be regarded as uniquely "Southern" has been plowed and sown so often that it is now exhausted. Racial tensions in the South, for example, have provided so much thematic material for writers of fiction that it is *almost* impossible to conceive of a fresh approach to the subject. The Civil War has *seemingly* been done to death. The struggle of the small farmer to survive the vicissitudes of nature and a destructive economy is *perhaps* too familiar to

bear significant repetition. What then is the "second generation" Southern writer to do? The question has been asked at more Southern writers' conferences than there are Southern writers.

If one admits the conditions of the question—and I am not sure that I do—there are several possible solutions. The Southern writer can continue to exploit familiar material in the same proven and possibly redundant way. He can try to find new values in the old situations. Or he can *minimize the fact* that he is Southern and eliminate the overriding importance of region as enveloping action in his poetry or fiction. I am not absolutely convinced that these are the only alternatives, since there is at least the theoretical possibility that some young Mississippi boy is sittin in a corncrib at this very moment writing a brilliant novel about a small farmer who returns from the Civil War and joins the Ku Klux Klan, a novel of greater significance and profundity than the entire Faulkner corpus. Because that novel has yet to be published, however, I will consider the alternatives suggested above, as they are illustrated in three recently published books by young (thirtyish) Southern writers.

II

The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones, by Jesse Hill Ford, seems to me to be a novel almost totally devoid of originality in structure. The action follows a pattern which was established in the archetypal *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and which has been repeated with varying degrees of success by scores of fiction writers. The experience of Southern life that undergirds the "form" of both Mrs. Stowe's famous nineteenth-century work and Jesse Hill Ford's recent one is that of an oppressive society hell-bent on destroying the Negro, and

with him its own soul. It is the vision of the abolitionist and the modern-day doctrinaire liberal, changed during recent years only in degree of intensity and in superficial detail. In essence William Lloyd Garrison and Ralph McGill share that vision; and Richard Wright, Erskine Caldwell, and now Mr. Ford give it the illusion of life and substance in their fiction.

The vision itself is characterized by purity and simplicity; and in this respect it resembles the medieval Christian view that gave form to such works as *Everyman*. It is no coincidence, therefore, that novels like *The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* resemble in their stylized plots and oversimplification of characters not only each other but also the highly conventional dramas of the Middle Ages, which were the product of a generally accepted and therefore a generally recognizable set of values, perfectly suited to popular consumption. Mr. Ford's novel is the *Everyman* of the 1960's—a racial morality play in which the characters are not so much flesh-and-blood people as figures in an allegory, the key to which lies in the mythology of the South promulgated by the liberal intellectual establishment and widely accepted as true by the American reading public. Whether or not the myth is supportable by fact is something I will not discuss, since it is not a literary question. I would, however, like to point out some of the characteristics of the literary form which this mythology engenders.

This form, which we will call *Everynegro*, is familiar to moviegoers and television watchers, as well as to those who read, and is composed of a stock plot in which stock characters react in predictable ways and come to reasonably predictable ends. There are variations possible within the form, but they are by no means infinite, since the vision of the subject matter is so narrow and simple.

The setting is almost always the South, though occasionally it is the West (with Indians instead of Negroes) and in rare instances the Northeast; however, even in such unlikely surroundings the villainous characters are often transplanted Southerners. The plot usually runs as follows. There is the hero, who is a Negro living in a small or medium-sized Southern town and minding his own business for the most part, while at the same time trying to "get ahead." No one of reasonable temperament could object to his conduct, but at least one person always does. This character, the villain, is a militant racist who believes that Negroes are little higher on the evolutionary scale than animals and consequently deserve to be treated no better. Occasionally he is strangely infatuated by the vitality of the Negro and finds dark-skinned women almost irresistible, while at the same time arguing that school integration is a threat to the virtue of white women. Needless to say, in the parent mythology this character speaks for the White South, indeed is the allegorical embodiment of that abstraction.

In defense of the hero and in opposition to the villain stands the white liberal—moral, tolerant, often an outsider (most frequently a northern reporter) or else a local product who was educated at an Eastern university. He speaks in the allegory for the majority of people outside the South, or American liberalism as a whole. Sometimes, if he is a native Southerner, he is unable to stand the pressure and consequently collapses in the face of concentrated opposition just at the most crucial moment. In rare cases he is actually able to prevail against the communal insanity around him, but his victory is either accomplished through outside help or is patently a temporary one.

Thus, in most instances, the Negro, who treads upon the

sensitive toe of the villain, is killed despite all efforts of the white liberal to the contrary.

Sometimes, of course, these three essential characters are fragmented into several characters each. There might, for example, be a number of noble Negroes (some more noble than others) who are being persecuted. And sometimes, just for a surprise, the author will allow one of them to escape to the North and Freedom. But there are always several deaths to counterbalance this triumph, since the reader must never be allowed to forget that there is still work to be done in the courts and legislatures of the land.

As for the villain, he too is often fragmented into several wicked monsters—some with social status and college degrees, others simply rednecks who fear the economic competition of the Negro. But they all have one thing in common, one concrete vice to which they give witness: their irrational hatred of all people who are black. Occasionally, again for some variation within the rigid form, one of these blackguards will be killed—usually in the goriest manner possible in order to satisfy the bloodlust of the reader, who identifies with the Negro and does not want to get pushed around for three hundred pages without some chance at revenge.

Seldom is the white liberal fragmented, since it does not do to picture the contest at anything near equal. He must stand in splendid isolation, though occasionally he is permitted one or two friends (a girl perhaps) to help him when the going really gets rough. Once in a while the United States government will intervene through one of its powerful agencies, much as the cavalry did in earlier westerns in order to subdue the cruel and barbaric redmen. But justice seldom triumphs, since the enveloping action for the drama, after all, is the South.

What I have outlined then is the underlying form of *Everynegro*; and each author, to the best of his ability, provides a structure which closely follows this form, since deviation here is not permitted. Thus, to justify his integrity, the writer must work overtime to create a texture which is original and imaginative enough to give the reader the illusion that he is not just reading the same old thing for the hundredth time—which, in fact, is precisely what he is doing. This form, I would insist, is not something I have simply put together for the occasion; because Mr. Ford is only one of many who have utilized it with middling to excellent results, among them Harper Lee, Erskine Caldwell, Shirley Ann Grau, Shirley Jackson, Carson McCullers, and—more recently—William Styron.

And Mr. Ford is true to the form, as faithful a follower as any I have read. Not only has he failed to omit a single essential ingredient, the fact is he has doubled the recipe and cooked up enough to serve six. Instead of one wicked policeman, there are several—not a good one in the lot. Of particular interest are Willie Joe Worth and Stanley Bumpas—Negro-baiters on a grand scale. Willie Joe is perhaps the ultimate in literary stereotypes (though most of the other characters don't miss the mark by much), and he is surely one of the most predictable villains in recent American fiction. If, upon reading his name for the first time, you were to speculate about his future conduct in the novel, you would be exactly right no matter what meanness came to your mind. Does he brutally assault Negroes? He does—frequently. Does he also beat up his wife and children? Yes, he does. Does he engage in miscegenation? Almost hourly, if one is to judge by the number of scenes devoted to such conduct. He also

goes on long drunks, uses obscene language, and commits murder.

In fact, it is Willie Joe who "liberates" Lord Byron Jones, Mr. Ford's angelic Negro undertaker, from the vale of tears known as Somerton, Tennessee. The policeman first shoots and then castrates Jones, in an act obviously symbolic of the psychological murder and emasculation that the Negro frequently suffers at the hands of the White majority. That this phenomenon exists in contemporary society can hardly be denied. The trouble is that Mr. Ford manages the scene so crudely. Willie Joe claims to disfigure the corpse in order to throw the authorities off the track and make them believe a Negro has committed the act. But everyone familiar with the lore of the South knows that it is the white people who perpetrate such atrocities on Negroes, not Negroes themselves. Even Yankees know that, because they have read about such crimes on the front pages of the *New York Times* and in the fiction of William Faulkner, a possible source for this particular scene.

The reason for Willie Joe's brutal crime is rather ingenious—one of the textural surprises that make this novel a cut above some cast in the same mold. It seems that L. B. Jones wishes to get a divorce from his sullen and adulterous wife, and circumstances force him to name Willie Joe as correspondent, thus destroying the white man's reputation, endangering his marriage, and for some reason jeopardizing the tightly woven fabric of the community. After trying unsuccessfully to bluff the undertaker into withdrawing his suit, Willie Joe finally decides that murder is the only way out, and proceeds to stalk his quarry like a hunter after a deer. At times this action is credible and interesting, despite the pietistic innocence of Jones and his Christ-like acceptance

of his own doom, an acceptance which seems more like muddle-headedness than the nobility I suspect Mr. Ford had in mind.

Around this central conflict between Willie Joe and Lord Byron Jones, rotates a galaxy of smaller conflicts, most of which involve race, a question which so thoroughly absorbs the unpleasant folk of Somerton that they seem to have time for little else. Indeed one wonders why such people do not go bankrupt or die of starvation, forgetting in their obsession the simple tasks and rituals of survival.

The most important of these tangential conflicts (perhaps the central conflict of the novel, plot notwithstanding) is the tension between Oman Hedgepath and his nephew Steve Mundine. Oman, a country lawyer of considerable acumen (we are told, not shown), is the embodiment of many of those vices that Willie Joe exemplifies, only in Hedgepath they are refined to respectability. Mundine comes from Chattanooga, which is closer to New York City than Somerton is; and consequently he believes Jones is entitled to a good lawyer to represent him in the divorce trial. Nella, Mundine's beautiful wife, agrees, because she is from California, which, though some 3,000 miles from New York, is also a long way from West Tennessee. Because Oman Hedgepath does not want to alienate his nephew and law partner, he decides to take the case. Then he proceeds to betray his client at every turn in an attempt to protect the adulterous Willie Joe from public exposure. Why he believes such a scandal would wreck the community is unclear; but whatever his murky reasoning, he tells Willie Joe enough about Jones's plans to provoke the murder and then helps to cover up the truth, thus becoming an accessory after the fact. At the time none of this seems to trouble his legal or moral sensibilities, though later,

after his nephew has left him, he does begin to feel some remorse.

The cause of that remorse, however, is something else again. And here Mr. Ford drags in the kitchen sink to break the camel's back. It is the Kennedy assassination which finally brings punishment in the form of "emptiness and sorrow and loss" to Hedgepath. He is "sickened" at what has happened and sees a connection between the national crime and the local one, signifying, perhaps, the presence of some vestigial conscience in his black Southern heart. I find this twist of plot a cheap trick, and all the more unforgivable because the book was written during those shrill, hysterical months immediately following the President's death, when it looked as if, by some miraculous bit of legerdemain, the press was actually going to pin the crime of a balmy Marxist on Southern segregationists. Mr. Ford makes much of the matter, and in doing so proves himself the fool of time.

But enough of this book, which was written by a very talented novelist who should be able to do better. Perhaps I have been too harsh; but to be truthful, I am tired of *Everynegro*, however well-wrought its texture and admirable its ideology. There has been much injustice in the South, and it is right and proper that these matters should have received fictional treatment. Never mind that the whole question has been oversimplified. Simplification is essential to all art, and the novelist is under no real obligation to depict the political or social situation as it actually exists. His is a world of another dimension, though nonetheless real.

But I believe the time has passed when this kind of performance can have any true vitality or relevance. It is anachronistic—almost as much so as Victorian poetry was in the 1920's or the heavy ironies of *The Waste Land* are today. And

the reason is not simply because the focus of racial unrest has shifted to the North, though this phenomenon is an important key to understanding current fiction on the subject. It is, rather, because the whole vast picture of race relations has altered completely in the last few years; and soon the great majority of Americans will no longer believe in the mythology upon which Mr. Ford's morality play must rest. More and more readers are going to demand a complexity from literature about race relations, one that does not sell the Negro short as well as the white. To quote from James Baldwin's article, "The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended" ("Everybody's Protest Novel," *The Partisan Review*, XVI [1949], 578-585). In that one opinion, at least, I am proud to call Mr. Baldwin "soul brother."

III

Ye Olde Bluebird, a novelette by Marion Montgomery, is also concerned with the race question; but it is quite different from anything I have ever read. For one thing, it is unusual (though not unique) in its formal concept: a one-act play embedded in a prose narrative. Then too, though it has as its principal characters a beleaguered Negro, a Southern White, and a Northern liberal, it is hardly a morality play in the mold of Mr. Ford's popular success. In fact, it is an implicit attack on *The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones* and all like works which tend to oversimplify a very complex question and in doing so to undermine, ever so subtly, the integrity and humanity of the individual Negro.

The title of the book is also, in the narrative, the name of

an original drama produced in a Northern university community and reviewed for the local newspaper by Mike, a Southern graduate student who suddenly finds himself faced with an agonizing dilemma: should he tell the truth about the wretched play and incur the wrath of the intellectual community, or should he lie and thereby compromise his own critical ideals? Stated in such bald terms the answer is obvious—tell the truth and the truth shall make you free. But in Mr. Montgomery's excellent story, as in life, things are not quite so simple. For one thing, Mike and his wife, Rachel, are involved socially with his antagonists and with Sara, the wife of a Negro who has taken the principal role in the unfortunate dramatic production. So human relationships complicate the choice. Mike's friend Paul Levison believes that the social message of the play is paramount and either fails to see the esthetic weaknesses or else is willing to overlook them. And friend though he is, he is prepared to condemn Mike on *ad hominem* grounds should the review be unfavorable. Then too, Rachel is faced with her own dilemma. Because she is a woman, she loves and cherishes her husband more than she cares about the intellectual issues at stake; and for this reason she shares his agony of choice with a full understanding of its implications. But she is also, to some extent, guilt ridden and tries to compensate for the social injustices the American Negro has suffered by self-consciously forcing her friendship on the somewhat embarrassed Sara. In Sunday school, where she teaches Sara's son, she goes out of her way to coddle the boy. Then, after the lesson has ended, she apologizes to Sara for not being able to offer her a ride; and upon learning that the woman has a car, she feels compelled to accept the casually proffered lift and to invite Sara up for a cup of tea—in a loud voice calculated to impress the neighbors with her tol-

erance. Finally, she insists that the Negro couple attend an opening night party; and though Robert, Sara's husband, demurs (for reasons later explained), Sara comes and as a consequence is exposed to the discussion between Mike and Paul, a brutal exchange which is painfully embarrassing to both women.

The debate, the playlet, forms the main body of the action, though the prose frame is by no means merely a device to justify Mr. Montgomery's flashy polemics; for the novelette is about people as well as ideas. Indeed the brief epilogue qualifies some of what has been said in the heated discussion and ends the work on a genuine note of poignancy. The dramatic dialogue, however, certainly constitutes a primary statement of the theme, which, unlike Mr. Ford's monotonous vision, is an extremely complex one—a galaxy of related ideas that coalesce into significant unity.

The scene begins at Mike and Rachel's apartment before the arrival of their guests. Mike has already written his review of *Ye Olde Bluebird* and reads the concluding passage to Rachel. When he asks if she likes it, she is frank in her reply.

Rachel: . . . No. No. It isn't honest. It was a lousy play and a lousy, lousy production and you don't say that.

Mike: Precisely. I say the one thing that is possible in my situation, limited truth. It's like limited war.

Rachel: But it's not like you. Facile and jargony. They expect better.

Mike: Of course they do. I am in the beautiful position of being persecuted for the truth or persecuted for shying away from it. I have chosen the weapon against which there is no effective retaliation—unenthusiastic, limited honesty.

When the guests arrive—four in number—they immediately assume that Mike has roundly condemned the play; so

the debate begins and ends on that assumption, which the reader knows to be erroneous. The irony here is double edged, since it not only undercuts much of Mike's vocal abuse of the play, but also the self-righteous rebuttal of his opponents, Paul Levison and newspaper editor Pete Dixon, who conclude that, as a Southerner, Mike is simply running true to type. Mike, of course, has the upper hand throughout, since he understands the irony of his own position and of theirs as well. In writing the review he has taken the prudent course in full awareness of his own baser motives; it then becomes his rhetorical task to show the others the baseness of theirs. Thus he consciously controls the dialectic throughout, assuming philosophical and critical postures in order to elicit, in Socratic fashion, the stock responses from the liberal opposition, responses they will have to call into question when they read the review the next morning. It is a marvelously theatrical situation, and both Mr. Montgomery and his protagonist make the most of it.

Mr. Montgomery, however, is wise enough not to let the fireworks proceed without some further safeguard to make sure the reader finds the highblown discussion completely credible. He adds alcohol as a protective ingredient, and before the play is ended, everyone is at least mildly intoxicated, whether on wine or on rhetoric, the observer may decide for himself.

After some preliminary sparring among the four men (Mike is upheld by John, an ineffective fellow graduate student and toady), Sara arrives, and the conversation turns to the play and the review. Pete, assuming the worst, demands to know what Mike has written, and Mike immediately turns the discussion into a consideration of motive as it functions both in the creation and the criticism of literature.

Here one suspects that hero and author are very nearly (though not quite) one, and what is spoken by Mike is, in some ways, a confession by Mr. Montgomery in behalf of himself and all writers. After castigating Joyce for espousing the doctrine of the apparently disinterested artist "indifferently pruning [*sic*] his nails," Mike derides Joyce's own finical handling of the recognition scene in *Ulysses*, and suggests that the author's restraint here is dramatic proof of the very emotion he is attempting to conceal. Then Mike relates the point to his own review:

Mike: Putting fear and anger aside for the purely aesthetic approach, I have not really put aside either. Potentially, either is still a factor. Gods don't really have fingernails to prune. Men pretending to be gods have those. The curse of motive destroys any position.

Paul: A man may be intellectually honest.

Mike: A man may *try* to be intellectually honest. . . . The human predicament is so insoluble not because we lack intelligence, as you may have supposed me to suppose—as my wife supposes of me—but precisely because of intelligence. We are so intelligent that we can be subtly dishonest with ourselves and never catch ourselves at it.

Herein lies much of the truth that Mr. Montgomery has captured in his novelette, but how does it relate to *Ye Olde Bluebird* and to the race question? Mike is telling Paul and Pete and, by implication, those of like mind, that their own motives must be examined and acknowledged before they can impugn the motives of the opposition. He is also saying something more important about the intellectual climate of contemporary America—namely, that the wells are poisoned, and that it is virtually impossible to discuss the matter rationally, even among rational people. This is not to say that

it is *utterly* impossible, for Mr. Montgomery has clearly stacked the cards in one important respect. Paul Levison is by definition (in the stage directions) a mediocre poet and a second-rate intellect. He is really no match for Mike, who has a first-rate mind and is no Southern racist but a man of some principle and compassion, as revealed in the final scene. At first this bothered me, since the debate resembles one of the Platonic dialogues in which Socrates always conquers his opponents in order to prove Plato's point. But I believe that the treatment is justifiable, since it is with such people that both Mike and Mr. Montgomery have their quarrel, and not with the responsible liberals who would have written the hard-boiled and honest review that Mike was unable to write. There are, unfortunately, too many Pauls in the world (as well as Johns) and not enough Ralph Ellisons; and Paul is all the more credible because no one in the book is free from his primary sin.

In the final scene, once again in prose narrative, the point of view switches, and we see the confusion of Rachel as she learns that Mike has known all along why Robert did not accompany Sara to the party. It seems that he has failed his preliminary examination because he devoted too much time to the play. Thus the overzealousness of such people as Paul has injured the very person they had hoped to save with their sociological drama. Mike also has his price to pay, for he must face his thesis director the next morning, and it is that formidable gentleman who was the director of the production. Whether or not his timidity will save him is left open to question, and the stakes are extremely high, for Rachel is pregnant and Mike's need for the doctorate is doubled in spades. And there the drama ends, with everyone compromised and

guilty, caught in the complex web of contemporary life that ensnares us all.

Here, it seems to me, is the perfect example of a younger Southern writer who takes an old, seemingly lifeless situation and breathes astounding vitality into it. Mr. Montgomery has taken Mr. Ford's characters, shifted them to a Northern setting, raised the thematic implications one or two levels on the ladder of abstraction, and come up with a new *aperçu* relevant to the race question. It is a remarkable performance which deserves more attention than it will probably get. For it is significant to note that *Ye Olde Bluebird* was put out in paperback, by a small, shoestring Southern press, while Mr. Ford's efforts were published by a large trade house. Such, I fear, are the perils of going against the grain in the current intellectual climate which is so well-defined in this excellent novelette.

IV

It is impossible to read Edwin S. Godsey's *Cabin Fever* without mixed feelings. The book, despite one or two lapses, is brilliant, the work of a poet whose sensibilities and consummate skill are rare and therefore priceless. But this is a post-humous volume; and for that reason any admiration is tempered by a haunting regret, which is intensified in proportion to the excellence of each succeeding poem.

Mr. Godsey, like Mr. Ford and Mr. Montgomery, was from the South—born in Bristol, Tennessee, and educated at Vanderbilt University before he went to Yale to obtain the Ph.D. Like Mr. Ford, he was also a student of Donald Davidson; and few who studied under that fierce defender of Southern culture ever quite escaped from his influence. So Mr. Godsey's credentials as a Southerner are unquestionable.

Yet, in the main, he chose not to write about the South or its peculiar problems but about the theological and epistemological questions which are the subject matter of most significant modern poetry. There are, to be sure, several poems in this volume which have a recognizably Southern setting: "Epilogue: the Wilderness," a story of hunting in East Tennessee; "For Grandfather Godsey (1829-1897)," which is concerned with the return of a Civil-War soldier; "Ode in Charcoal," about religion and superstition in a rural community. There are many others, however, which cannot be called Southern at all, unless one probes deeply into their philosophical origins to discover the mind and sensibility of the poet who created them. Then, perhaps, the "Southernness" becomes apparent.

But the amazing thing about this volume is its versatility. First consider the prosody. In so doing one finds nearly every metrical and stanza pattern at the disposal of a poet: blank verse; free verse; sonnets; strictly-rhymed quatrains, tercets, couplets; everything but ballades and rondeaus, which do not lend themselves very well to serious poetry. And Mr. Godsey is, for the most part, a serious poet. There are a few lighter pieces in the volume for the sake of variety (again proof of his versatile talent), but by and large these poems have themes which are profound in their implications.

The first group of ten is devoted to problems of art and the artist; and at least one, "Words on Sunday," is a minor masterpiece. The dramatic situation of the poem poses an epistemological problem which in the end has aesthetic as well as theological implications, particularly when one realizes that it is a response to "Sunday Morning" by Wallace Stevens. As in Stevens' famous piece, the speaker is a husband who meditates about the difficulty of knowing truth, whether artistic

or ontological. The wife is present too, though not in her peignoir; but there is also a bluejay who

... hops across our lawn
Under the hackberry tree, cocks his head,
Pecks and pecks through bluegrass, dead leaves, lifts
The long beak and swallows a hackberry. This is the
Certain extent of our communication.

So the problem is defined in terms of the bird and to some extent solved in those very same terms. The speaker says to his wife,

I love you. Hear me. I love you. Listen.

Next

Sunday we must attend a definition.
We will prepare remembering this blue jay.

But the final solution is at best only partially satisfactory, the compromise of a modern intellectual striving for certainty in a world conditioned by an inimical positivism which holds that there is no such thing as knowledge in the sense that he desires to have it. He says:

And there is no communion of the earth,
For we began in words, and words are neither
Landscapes or meditations. They are a wild
Creature who lives out wild in the out-of-us.
They are defined by separation. They are
Blue jays wheeling into a paddy-field.

The second section is concerned exclusively with matters theological, though many of the other poems in this volume have religious overtones. Anglican though he was, however, Mr. Godsey does not serve up the vision of an easy, traditional faith. Ultimate commitment to the supernatural is, as he

presents it, at best difficult, at worst a hopeless struggle with the scepticism that pervades the modern consciousness. His poem "Euphrosyne," originally published in the *Sewanee Review*, will serve as a good illustration.

This narrative lyric deals with the search by modern man for spiritual peace, and that search proves an agonizing one. The longing is there, the dissatisfaction with a postivistic world; but the object of the quest is elusive, only to be found in madness or oblivion. The searchers, pictured as a rescue squad, grope through a haunting classical wood to find the lost Grace, but the going is rough and fraught with danger:

By night we had the wolves and little sleep,
Rocks, pythons, laurel thickets by day.
But we pushed on, till we were in so deep
We found the gorge where this crazed woman lay
And did our best.

They find her to be sure, but they cannot revive her, since she is a refugee from another era; so they must return again to the modern world having failed to revive the victim. The final comment is both bitter and chilling—an admission of defeat:

She had lost contact. You know how it is:
As the anesthetist numbers you down
You fall and fall colder than the sea is,
Beyond Orion and beyond Orion.

The third section of the volume is specifically devoted to criticism of contemporary society, and here again there are several poems of uncommon merit. One example is "For Grandfather Corns (1852-1936)"—that rare phenomenon, a completely successful modern sonnet. The speaker, a young

Promethean, is berating his dead grandfather for having recited from memory, and in its entirety, *Paradise Lost*. He accuses the old puritan of frightening the children with visions of hell and concludes with a proud boast that epitomizes the arrogance of youth:

But I do not dream I fly away. I do.
I have climbed higher than a Puritan.
I have winged down on valleys from bright air.
I have wheeled over where the roots go through,
Where your stained skull compounds with earth and rain.

This poem was originally published in a journal whose editors, I strongly suspect, did not understand the sharp irony of these last lines (I may be underestimating them). The boast is of course an empty one. The speaker too must return to earth after his Icarian airplane flight; and eventually he, like his grandfather, will lie under the earth. But when his time comes there will be no hope or consolation in the religion that the grandfather embraced. *Paradise Lost* is, after all, about heaven as well as about hell; and like *The Odyssey* it is a comic epic rather than a tragic one, since it ends with a promise of redemption. So the arrogant young man loses, and the grandfather wins.

"Hoppy," also in this section, is a serious poem with moments of exquisite humor. The narrator of the saga, a Hollywood cameraman killed in World War II, is recalling an incident that occurred on a Hopalong Cassidy set and which disturbs his memory even beyond the grave. It seems that just as the crew is filming the final scene, in which Hoppy turns, waves, and then rides off into the sunset, a hardboiled actress is suddenly struck by a vision of epic splendor that blots out the harsh realities of her own tawdry world. At that moment

Hoppy is transformed from a cheap, make-believe hero into an irresistible legend. She cannot bear the beauty of it; and jumping on her horse, she gallops out to join him.

For the cynical cameraman, who has been killed at Anzio, where men were slaughtered like animals on a narrow strip of beach, the whole idea is ridiculous and bewildering, though he does dream for a moment that Hoppy might have saved him as well. Then he returns to his story and tries to imagine what it must have been like when the girl finally caught up with her hero.

Hoppy would grin and nod:

"You keep a sharp eye out for Indians, Ma'am."

And she, "At last, I've found you, Hoppy. Hoppy, I love you." But Ma'am," he'd say, "no epic heroes
Have time for love—I mean, the family kind.

I can't be different. It's mostly killing here.

A hard country, here, to live in." "Better,"

She'd say.

Hoppy finally gives in, takes her along, and they ride out of the speaker's consciousness and into the realm of myth. Their story becomes a legend among movie people, told and retold by old actors and thus immortalized in the way that heroic adventures were preserved by the ancient bards. But the cameraman, a spokesman for the contemporary age, cannot share the vision and makes up his own ending, which signifies the death of the epic hero at the hands of modern atomic weaponry:

It's nice to think like that, but what I think is

They ran into trouble at Los Alamos

Back in the forties, and needed to move fast

("Ma'am, what in hell is that?") and didn't make it—

And lost the way I lost at Anzio.

The fourth section contains poems of a personal nature, some addressed to friends, some love lyrics, and some about domestic life. Of these I particularly admire "One for the Road," in which the poet takes the oldest, tritest conceit in the literary tradition and makes it work just once more, perhaps for the last time, though I would not want to underestimate the ingenuity of future generations. Since it would emasculate the poem to summarize it or to quote in part, I reproduce it in its entirety.

One for the Road

I laid no seige and brought no 3-ton ram
To starve you out or batter in the door.
You didn't need the cannon where I came.
You knew, honey, I was no chevalier.

So our Great Troy was won with espionage.
I paid for the drinks, whispered, found my traitress
And so with her assistance wired the bridge.
The mayor wept, reading the press release.

But every burg has got its ruins—its gout
In suburbia, pleuritic factories,
Malignant slums, thrombosis in Main Street.
The slabs go down on crowded cemeteries.

Woman, there were nine strata of Ilios.
Helen's was burned. The others fell to pieces.

The final section of the book is composed of poems employing the metaphor of teaching; and while admittedly too many college professors are writing this sort of thing, there is not a single one in the group that fails to come alive. "Stillness: an Eclogue," for instance, though it is a colloquy between a teacher and a coed, is really about contemplative

values and the difficulty of preserving them in a life of mundane domesticity.

The girl, Miss Savage, has somehow stumbled across the secret of inner peace in the course of her studies, and the teacher wants to impress the importance of the experience upon her memory. But he is afraid that she is already forgetting in her anticipation of marriage, which she believes will be the crowning experience of her life. He asks her:

Where is it now,
This fjord where you were? And in the moment
Of your death grasps, where will this fjord be?

He recalls other images to her in an effort to make her understand and save her: a formal garden, a classical statue, a frozen river. Finally he begins to question her about her future, and she replies:

I will be married. I will have fine children and
A fine, warm home. And I will love my husband.

He persists:

But who will be the dreamer of Norway then?
What being will you make before the children?

She is evasive, taking refuge in the old bourgeois banalities, and he becomes impatient:

Perhaps. Perhaps. But this will not suffice.
We build an altar to some notion of stillness.

There is no hope for her, however, and she has the final word, repeating for herself, perhaps, as well as for him, the same litany of clichés:

I will be married. I will have fine children and
Be warm in winter. I will love my husband.

In this necessarily brief discussion of *Cabin Fever* I can only add a biographical note which will suggest some measure of the man who wrote these excellent, indeed brilliant poems. He died in an unsuccessful attempt to save his small son, who had fallen through the ice on a winter lake in North Carolina. It was a genuinely heroic gesture that affirmed many of the values embodied in his poetry, and I cannot believe that in mentioning it I have entirely ignored the question at hand.

V

These three books, different though they are, prove that there is still something for Southern writers to write about and still an allegiance to the tradition of technical excellence established by the older generation of writers, who for the first time gave full-throated voice to the sensibility of the region. An anonymous writer for *Time* magazine once stated that Southern writers have no sense of form. This charge is obviously untrue, and one wonders how he could ever have made it with the evidence so clearly to the contrary. Obviously writers Ford, Montgomery, and Godsey belie the charge. Even Mr. Ford, whom I have not treated too kindly, has an excellent grasp of fictional technique. Unfortunately his understanding of his subject matter, which must be the world's body, is to some extent corrupted by political and sociological considerations. At least this is true if I read him correctly. It is possible, of course, that I have missed the point. Maybe the novel is, after all, a clever parody of *Every-negro* and not an example of it. It would certainly be a good one, except in a few places where the characters take on flesh and blood.

But Marion Montgomery and Edwin Godsey exemplify

both the structural and the textural virtues that make for significant literature; and though Mr. Godsey is tragically lost, Mr. Montgomery and a host of others too numerous to mention still remain. For this reason I can see no immediate end to the making of poetry and fiction in the South—only a few dangers that the younger writers must avoid if they are to attain any measure of greatness.

There is, after all, still life in the region, in its customs and attitudes, and in its people. The “proliferation of the supermarket” (Flannery O’Connor’s phrase) has not yet obliterated the farms, the small towns, the landscapes that are still peculiarly Southern. And when that happens, as it probably will, there will still be, for awhile, a sense of history and of the peculiarities in modern urban living that will characterize the Southerner’s literary viewpoint. It is likely that in the future more and more Southern writers will choose the way of Edwin Godsey; but, as he did, they will probably bring to their subject matter a sensibility strikingly similar to that of the men who pioneered the Southern Renaissance at a time when the South was still a clearly recognizable cultural entity.

LITIGATION AT BURNING BUSH
FOR FLANNERY O'CONNOR,
OBIIT NOV. 9, 1964

BY GEARY BLANKENSHIP

No eye has seen nor ear heard, without
careful straining, what binds a loose array
into a body, what holds a bunch of trees
in orchardship when planter's hands aren't there.

A tourist will not see, with peach production
tables, how a flow not sap nor blood
has run its red clay course and reared what were
a family but for genes. The long sojourner
might sense that bond, more of the bowels than brains,
that grows a people from a land and gives
a cousin grief when distant kin are downed.

Concurrent then, we grieve; and we demand
of God a careful justice (hidden, if need be)
in culling out His purer strain of seed trees.

CHATEAUBRIAND AND "THE GIRL FROM LOUISIANA"

BY HARRY REDMAN, JR.

FLAMBOYANT is the word that best describes French Romanticism, and it also describes one of its chief personalities in literature, François René de Chateaubriand—soldier, statesman, diplomat, historian, author, lover. While the French Revolution was running its terrible course, he traveled for a short while in the then new United States, but just where he went and how much he really saw are matters which still divide scholars into opposing and even hostile camps. Whatever the facts, the experience had at least an inspirational value, since North America acts as the backdrop for much of Chateaubriand's work. One of his best stories and one that appealed most to his contemporaries is the novelette *Atala*. Set between the Florida swamps and Louisiana, it recounts the love of an Indian boy, Chactas, and an Indian girl, Atala, who have considerably more than their share of problems. To begin with, Atala's tribe is hostile to that of her lover. Then, to complicate matters even more, she believes that a vow her mother once made precludes any eventual union with the lovelorn Chactas. Finally the beset heroine commits suicide—and in so doing she made Chateaubriand and Louisiana a sensation in French literature. On this side of the Atlantic, Chateaubriand came to be viewed by Louisianians with sentiments akin to reverence. Likewise Louisiana—or the *idea* of Louisiana—never ceased to fasci-

nate Chateaubriand. Whether he had actually seen it in person or not, he had much to say about it not only in *Atala* and *René* but also in his sparkling posthumous autobiography, the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. For sheer reading pleasure, these memoirs rate with the author's very best work.

Toward the conclusion of the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, in a section devoted to notable women writers of his time, the author inserted a curious chapter on a person he calls "la Louisianaise," the girl from Louisiana. Sometimes she is referred to as "Célestine," but nowhere in the chapter does one learn anything that would tell us who she was or what she was doing in France. Was she a student? A tourist, perhaps? As it happened, she was neither. The fact that she was a writer does not provide much of a clue as to her identity, because she appears not to have published what she wrote. About the only piece of evidence at our disposal hitherto has been a scrap of paper intended to serve as a table of contents for Book Eleven, Part Four, of an early manuscript draft of the memoirs. On this scrap of paper Chateaubriand had written "Célestine Soniat." Not even this helps very much. The late French Chateaubriand specialist, Maurice Levaillant, was able to declare quite frankly in his great edition of the memoirs that this name is all that was known about the mysterious "girl from Louisiana."

Let us see what Chateaubriand has to say about her, at least up to that point at which we run into a blank wall. First of all, she reminded him constantly of the Indian princess *Atala*, and, as a matter of fact, his chapter on her is filled with quotations from and allusions to the novelette by that title. To Chateaubriand she was "the daughter of the wilderness," "the maiden of one's last love," "that maiden who is sent to the warrior prisoner to enchant his tomb." By a re-

markable coincidence, the girl from Louisiana bore a curious resemblance to the Indian heroine as one sees her in Baron Girodet's well-known canvas, *Atala's Burial*. Even by Chateaubriand, this painting seems to have been considered Atala's standard portrait, so to speak. Still quoting more or less from *Atala*, Chateaubriand continued in his memoirs, "I would have been glad to weave her a crown of blue mallows, especially if in the wilderness of Jore, at sunset, she had sung of her absent homeland" To sing of her absent homeland was not a pastime with much appeal to Célestine, but sometimes she did while away the hours writing her memoirs, extracts of which she read to Chateaubriand. It was after one such session that Chateaubriand thanked her in a note which he included in his own memoirs, after having "doctored" it up somewhat. A little later I shall need to return to this note.

Fate decreed that Célestine Soniat was not to enchant the tomb of this new Chactas. If anything, she seemed destined to *disenchant* it. "Atala" had the bad—or excellent—luck to wound Chactas' opinions in matters political, and with that the cherished illusion evaporated. Chateaubriand's account becomes so vague at this point that the reader is left wondering whether Célestine all at once appeared so unimportant that the author simply dropped her in order to pass on to someone else or whether he deliberately omitted or deleted the essentials of a little drama that he decided it was best not to dwell upon. From what I have learned about the relationship, I am inclined to take the latter view and to assume that much of what was omitted, was omitted because it hurt Chateaubriand's pride. Whatever the case, it seems at best odd, when one bears in mind the author's effusive remarks at the beginning, that he should suddenly speed to the conclusion with almost no details, or at least none that tell us

much or that enable us to reconstruct what must have happened. When he resumes it is to state, "Sometime later" What does he mean, *later*? There is no context, no indication as to what has intervened. "Sometime later, Célestine wrote me that she was busy preparing what she planned to wear when she would be presented at Louis Philippe's court. I put my bearskin back on. May heaven grant her peace and love, insofar as those things last," he concludes wearily, drawing a curtain as it were between himself and his reader. But what exactly had happened? Chateaubriand is altogether reticent. He mentions no time when he might have met Célestine Soniat and was content to relate that "a girl from Louisiana came to me from the Mississippi," without disclosing either *when* or *why* she had come. There are other problems, too, in Chateaubriand's reminiscences. How old was the writer when he knew "the girl from Louisiana?" How old, for that matter, was *she*? Was there a noticeable disparity? Nor does Chateaubriand provide details about the Louisiana girl's social or marital status. From reading his memoirs, one gets the impression that she was unmarried. Undoubtedly Chateaubriand intended to create such an impression. Certain it is that he would have had a reason to do so—Célestine Soniat had a husband.

Several kind persons¹ and innumerable documents in the United States and France have made it possible for me to assemble data on Célestine Soniat and reconstruct her career while formulating an idea as to the place she occupied in the later Chateaubriand's life. Leaving aside for the moment her

¹ For their kindness in putting information at my disposal, I should like to thank Miss Lucille Soniat; Mrs. Frederic R. Swigart, Sr., née Allain; Mrs. William Thompson Smith; the City Halls of the eighth and seventeenth zones in Paris; and the administration of Père Lachaise Cemetery.

undeniable personal attractions, Célestine had come into the world with two characteristics which would have endeared her to M. de Chateaubriand. Like him, she was of old Breton stock, counting among her ancestors a Breton army officer who had settled in Louisiana in the eighteenth century. It is also possible that in a very dim past she and Chateaubriand could even have been distant relatives. Moreover, she was born in those "savannahs," as he called them, that the author of *René* and *Atala* had made famous. At the time Chateaubriand met her, she was still very young, having been born October 16, 1804. Her father was Valérien Allain, a wealthy planter, and her mother Céleste Duralde Allain. If later Célestine Allain Soniat took it into her head to write her memoirs, this fact should not come as a surprise. On her mother's side she was descended from Charles Perrault, with whose Mother Goose Tales and *Cinderella* we all grew up. The Allains were fond of reading and named Célestine's two younger sisters for heroines of Richardson and Voltaire. Célestine, Clarisse, and Alzire had an older brother Valérien, Jr. With the other children, Célestine spent most of her earliest years on her father's plantation near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She was not yet nine when her mother died. In keeping with Mme. Allain's wishes, she and Clarisse, soon followed by Alzire, left for New Orleans and the already famous convent school of the Ursulines. The nuns were pleased with Célestine. When she had completed her studies, in order to patch up a quarrel between her father and an uncle, it was decided that she should marry her cousin Jean Ursin Soniat, or Soniat Du-Fossat. It was not a love match, and no one seems to have asked her what her own inclinations were. So it was that on June 28, 1823, she walked to the altar of St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans. She and her husband were soon ensconced in

domestic life, dividing their time between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The household had its problems, though. A year after his marriage Ursin Soniat had a serious accident. Célestine, too, had troubles. She lost a child, which weakened her health. According to one of her nieces, Célestine Eustis, doctors advised her to take a trip to France. This would seem to be an odd cure. But if travel really were the solution, why France necessarily? Mlle. Eustis' recollections omit one or two circumstances which, in my opinion, make this "cure" at least understandable. At that time Louisiana people often went to France, and for various reasons. Some went to continue or complete their studies, others to travel and bask in a continental atmosphere. It was at about the time Mme. Soniat decided to take her "cure," too, that her brother Valérien was spending ten years in France. Since France had its attractions and since there was no deep attachment to her husband to restrain her, Célestine Soniat embarked. Rare visits excepted, she never returned.

From Mlle. Eustis' reminiscences we learn that her aunt was pretty, *petite*, had admirable manners, and that she knew how to dress to perfection. We also learn that, when she wanted to, she knew how to tell risqué but highly entertaining stories. With these attributes and with all that intellect, beauty, and an immense fortune can do to make a woman's existence ecstatic, Mme. Soniat DuFossat settled in Paris. Almost immediately, life took on an entirely different tone. Gone were her delicate health, an ill-chosen husband, and all the unpleasantness she had known. To live and be happy became a passion, as she herself became a Parisian. She had a piano, and she played and sang. She took walks and drives, received and paid visits. Most of all, she indulged her fondness for dancing. Toward the beginning of January, 1836, she

was hostess at a spectacular ball that was commented upon in the press. At the palace she figured in the same quadrilles as the princes and princesses. She used to claim that, to her, Paris was paradise and that it seemed to be trying to thank her for being charming and beautiful. While she did not have what is called a "salon," she nonetheless gathered around her a brilliant circle of close, intimate friends—among them Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and other literary personalities.

Precisely how Chateaubriand met her I do not know. Valérien Allain knew a number of writers, and possibly he introduced them. Mlle. Eustis claims that the beautiful apartment that her aunt took was located in the same building as that of Mme. Récamier. Mme. Récamier, whom Chateaubriand visited every day, was the author's mistress for twenty or thirty years. Some there are who hold that the relationship was platonic, but whether it was or not, it did not prevent numerous adventures and interests, sometimes platonic and sometimes otherwise, on the writer's part. At all events, if Mme. Soniat lived in the same building as Mme. Récamier it is certain that sooner or later Chateaubriand would have had to encounter her. They met, then. Soon Chateaubriand was listening to her as she read from her memoirs and thinking that she was "charming." Then the—for him—inevitable happened . . . he fell in love. Between the two, in a short while, little pet names came to be used. Célestine, to her new admirer, became "the daughter of the wilderness," while Chateaubriand was "the old savage" or "the old sachem."

"Célestine wrote me several letters," the sachem records in his memoirs. What he does not trouble himself to add is that he too wrote some. And most tender they were. To Joséphine Favrot, her cousin, Mme. Soniat once admitted that she had received from him "several very flattering letters." They

must have been very flattering indeed, because she declined to show them. Here is a bantering note that Chateaubriand penned to her on February 5, 1833, while he was waiting to be tried in a sensational censorship case. The government's position was not only weak but ridiculous, and Chateaubriand knew he would win. Hence he could afford to be light-hearted. It is clear that Mme. Soniat did not share his mood, and it is just as clear that she had told him so. Her own state of mind, it is true, could have had other or multiple causes. In any case, Chateaubriand hastened to console her with the note below.

Why is Célestine sad? Young and beautiful, what could there be that she misses? Her homeland? When a person is happy, his homeland is in his happiness; and any place in the world is good enough to die in.

If I weren't sick, I would go at once to see "the daughter of the wilderness," ask her for the rest of her story, and encourage her.

Flowers will soon be in bloom and will console her.

Soon I will go lay my homage at her feet.

CHATEAUBRIAND.

The more he saw Mme. Soniat the more she captivated him. He continued to see his Indian maiden in her and once, in a moment of passion, he went so far as to write her, "Oh Célestine, had I but known you earlier, my Atala would have been more beautiful." Such were the Louisiana girl's powers of attraction.

Like many another writer before and since, Chateaubriand tried several genres for which he had little true talent. One was the theatre. He had written a play about Moses and had it tentatively performed in private. To say that it failed would be charitable. He was disappointed, but his disappoint-

ment did not make him lose interest in his American correspondent. After the *Moïse* fiasco, he wrote her a note that I have mentioned earlier. It shows us, parenthetically, that Célestine was still writing.

Paris, 22 December 1834.

I am at your disposal, Madame; what you have been kind enough to let me know about your inspirations makes me want very much to hear the rest. The river that I celebrated sends me its muse. I am grateful; and if I could still dream up "the daughter of the wilderness," today I would do a better job of painting her.

CHATEAUBRIAND.

In the version of his memoirs that the author intended to be made public after his death, he suppressed the first six words of the note, the "I am at your disposal, Madame." The omission of *madame* is worthy of note. Clearly Chateaubriand did not plan to let his public know that his correspondent was married, but the corrected version of the note as given above makes it obvious that he was himself well aware of the fact.

Naturally, it would be interesting to know what Célestine Soniat thought of Chateaubriand. Fortunately for us, she expressed her views in a long letter to her cousin Joséphine Favrot in 1836. For a man who was nearly seventy at the time, Chateaubriand must have been in a commendable state of preservation, since Mme. Soniat was a decade off in guessing his age. She wrote her cousin that he was a man of sixty, that he was short and tended to be paunchy, and that his facial expression radiated deep intellect. "He is very gallant, very flattering, perhaps a little too much so for his age," she added. "He is fond of women, and has not given up his claim to attracting them. He is still lively, full of imagination, and in appearance has *the heart* of a young man," she concluded.

When Chateaubriand devoted a chapter to her in his autobiography in December, 1837, less than two years later, there can be no doubt that either the adventure was over or that the chapter at some time or other underwent serious revision. Just what happened it is hard to tell. Chateaubriand's account as printed is witty but cryptic and abrupt. He rather allows it to be assumed that the break had been due to a matter of clothes, so to speak. To attend a ball at Louis Philippe's court, as we have seen, Célestine had a dazzling gown prepared . . . and told Chateaubriand that she was "busy" getting it ready. Irritated, Chateaubriand put back on a "bearskin" that must have been a startling contrast to the attire worn by his little Louisiana "Indian" as she set out to absorb as much civilization as she could at the palace of a king that Chateaubriand despised. In the eyes of her erstwhile admirer, "Atala" immediately lost her charms and became a sort of Cinderella after the stroke of twelve, or worse. (Chateaubriand even likened her to a crocodile.) Referring again to *Atala*, he reproached her for having "watched the smoke of the stranger's celebrations," an allusion to Atala's fleeing her supposed father's tribe with her lover. In Célestine Soniat's case, he meant the balls that she so adored and which she attended at the Tuileries Palace. Chateaubriand's political convictions made him detest the palace's current occupant, who had been placed on the French throne by the July Revolution. To him, Louis Philippe was a usurper, a "stranger." Going to balls at his palace was something that Chateaubriand could not, or would not, forgive. However, for Mme. Soniat to attend them was, for her, natural enough. Outlawed and wandering from country to country during the Revolution of 1789, the new king had once received in Louisiana a princely welcome that

he never forgot, and when he ascended the throne Louisianians were always much in evidence at his court.

For me, Mme. Soniat's gown was a pretext. In a very real sense, a pretext to get rid of Chateaubriand. For Chateaubriand's hurt pride, it was a means of making his readers think it was he who had gotten rid of her. Mme. Soniat sincerely admired the famous writer, no doubt. Nevertheless, she probably wanted to put an end to the importunate attentions of an elderly man who, decidedly, was becoming too assiduous. She could hardly have been unaware of what he was at that very moment doing to re-establish the dethroned Bourbons. Chateaubriand's political activities were too public. It had been for writing in the interest of the Bourbons' cause that he had been put on trial shortly before. In desperation, as I see it, Célestine mentioned her presentation at court, knowing full well what the effect would be. This gave Chateaubriand an opportunity to withdraw honorably rather than be dismissed. He seems to have taken the hint. He withdrew, sadly wishing Célestine "peace and love." Love for someone else, he must have presumed.

That someone, if there really was anyone, would not have been her husband. While no passionate love was ever involved, relations between M. and Mme. Ursin Soniat were and remained polite, even cordial. Although living apart, this curious couple went so far as to adopt one of Mme. Soniat's nieces, whom Célestine reared in Paris while Ursin continued to live in America. For years Ursin thought his wife would one day return. He died in 1858, leaving her the bulk of his property.

I have already stated that Célestine Soniat seldom came back to the United States, even for visits. There was little need to, since Paris had become home and since she formed in

the French capital a wide and close circle of friends. Nor had she been alone when she arrived. With her had come her maid, Anna Léandre, and three cousins, the Misses Hopkins, who married and settled in France. Then, too, there was her brother Valérien. His sister, Clarisse Eustis, also became a widow in 1858, at which time she too moved to France, where she was to die in 1876. From time to time, Célestine Eustis and other relatives and connections were with her. This was more than ever true during the War of Secession, when those who could had to seek a haven from the horrors of invasion and occupation. A nephew, George Eustis, Jr., was one of the numerous relatives in Paris at that time. He arrived in the midst of an international incident that followed the seizure of the Confederate emissaries Mason and Slidell aboard a British vessel. As John Slidell's secretary, Eustis had shared the imprisonment. When Great Britain compelled the United States to release the commissioners, Eustis proceeded to France, settling there with his wife, the beautiful Louise Corcoran, and remaining until his death in 1872. Remembering his native State and also in his wife's honor, he named his house at Cannes *Villa Louisiana*. Célestine Soniat had died though when, much later, there arrived in Paris another nephew, James B. Eustis, United States ambassador to France from 1893 until 1897. Some of Ursin's relatives were also in France. These included an adolescent who had been packed off to a school there so that he could not run away and attempt to join the Southern armies.

Except for the occasional trips she made to America, Mme. Soniat resided continuously in Paris. When death overtook her on October 4, 1882, she no longer lived in the house where she used to encounter Chateaubriand half a century earlier. She died in her apartment at 5, rue de Thann, near the Parc

Monceau. Anna Léandre, who had once been her slave and who was always her friend, survived her and was one of her heiresses. Upon Mme. Soniat's death, Anna moved to a Paris convent, where she lived as a boarder for the rest of her life. Like George Eustis, Jr., she would not hear of returning to the United States. As had been true of her mistress, she adored Paris. "I like my boulevard too much," she used to say when people tried to coax her back to America. On May 22, 1881, upon Mme. Soniat's nomination, she had been awarded a medal by the National Society for the Encouragement of Good Works in recognition of her attachment, devotion, and service. She lived until January 8, 1887, and, in keeping with a clause in Mme. Soniat's will, chose to be buried beside her mistress in the historic Père Lachaise Cemetery. Chateaubriand had died many years before, in 1848.

THREE POEMS

BY EDGAR MARCEL SMITH

THOMAS PATRICK ARKWRIGHT

1862-1940

Though a half-tongued boy then I can see him
heaped in a corner of the living room
like a pile of scantlings under a patchwork shawl.
I could see just one eye moving like a polyp
behind the bryophytes covering lip and scalp.
He held my wrist with a gator's paw and told
me stories I cannot remember at all.
He had one last snuffbrown incorrigible
snag of a tooth festering in his jaws
that my dad finally pulled with a pair of pliers.

The old folks say he used to hold his bride,
sitting on a stool, at arm's length in one hand.
He hewed the joists for their house with an axe he stole,
and rove the shingles with a borrowed froe and maul.
He got up before day to walk through the woods
six miles to the mill where, sun and rain, he plied
a hickory-shafted peavey in a catch-pond full
of logs till dusk; then refreshed by a snort of white mule
got in the store against his pay he walked
back home. Not one to waste time he took gun and sack
and shot what he could, rabbit, woodcock, or coon,
and gathered for kindling rosiny knots of pine.
He begot eleven young ones he could own,
and buried three behind the meeting house
where of a Sunday he sang in a clamorous bass
before sleeping through the sermon.

Younger folks, including granddaughters and nieces,
sniggering tell of the times and places
the old fool laid for them, breathing through mossy
whiskers his tobacco and boozy
breath on their necks, fumbling their skirts,
talking in what they heard as bleats.

I remember the night he died: I sneaked back
from my aunt's to witness his going, and heard
his whisper: May Almighty God
hang himself by the neck
for inventing flesh that will rot,
and my young ones be burned forever for not
killing me quick.

MARGARET CALVERT ARKWRIGHT

1869–1960

And so I came back home and gave
regard to the reliquary of
my grandmother: a mineral effigy
lichened at finger and toe,
brainbox and wombdoo tufted
with moss, the salt blood
withdrawn from the veins that fed
the great seas of the belly
before she was dead.

Can the years be dissolved? I see
in a clapboard shack gone half a century
another man bending over another body
lighted at eyes, fragrant with sweat and breath,
stirring with hands and voice
the bibles blood to a storm that fuses
plasmic juice into germ.

Sing the box into the earth. Let worm
and water, possum and microbe translate
her effigy into fuel and furniture.
Roots reach down where brain and bowels were,
and stems above reach out and ramify.

DAVID ARKWRIGHT

1893–1906

He was among the daughters and sons
flowered from Arkwright root;
both father and mother acknowledged him,
and she was known for truth.

More though than this hearsay report
he had the Arkwright face;
bony at brow, narrow at jaw,
eyes the color of grass.

He had the genial witness too
of a slopeshouldered stance
from which hung arms like stalks that blossomed
broad and knuckly hands.

He was a clabberfooted boy.
Even his younger sisters and cousins
were welcomer than he in games
devised by older brothers

who used to loop fishline around
his thumbs and tie the line to limbs
that held him standing with hands over head,
helpless, for an hour sometimes.

while they hunted flying squirrels or snared
terrapins and paisley snakes,
or fished for crawdads and goggle-eyes
in ditches and creeks,

or coupled like calvinist puppies
in thickets or barns
or sunny and freckled went skinny-dipping
in the cold brown streams.

He bawled like a bull-calf, but never tattled
though his thumbs were purple as prunes for days,
nor was persuaded to stop trotting after
by this device,

and it is reported that near one spring noon
his brother Ira, engaged in so tethering him,
received a flat foot in the fork of his belly
and paused in the game.

No one can remember how early he learned
from his mother's cracked and raspy hands
to shape out of Grandfather Calvert's banjo
the fearsome songs

she sang in her reedy nasal soprano,
nor when he began
with knob-knuckly fingers to shape around
them sounds of his own.

He used to sit long with grassy head bent
to the thing as if hearing water permute
rock into tree that grew into frame
or stuff of cat

whose vegetable guts he thumped
into organs of sound he only could
have known in Salisbury of Thule
or in his blood.

In his thirteenth year it was Ira led him
to play at the Bluegill for rackety dances
where he sat like a hillock about which
wives and wenches

turned as their bosoms shook to his thrumming,
and when smoke and whisky had made him pale
tapstress and tapstress's daughter lay with him
to keep him from ill.

His schoolteacher stayed in tears about him.
He scarcely came and when he did
he slept all the time, and snored. He would come
to no good, she said.

But she needn't have worried; for once going to call
his father to dinner, the rusty barbed wire
of the fence he was crossing snapped
and whipped bare

the bones of his left wrist. His reply
was a bellow and when his dad came to see
he fought him away saying Look
here now, that's the

hand I fret with, spilling his blood
on his father until
he finally relaxed, having
no more to spill.

Seeing some on his father's face he said
My blood sure is pretty, Dad—purple-red
as the shit of a mockingbird that has fed
on blackgum berries. Then he was dead.

CERTAIN LADIES OF QUALITY: FAULKNER'S VIEW OF WOMEN AND THE EVIDENCE OF "THERE WAS A QUEEN"

BY MELVIN E. A. BRADFORD

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S attitude toward women and his conception of their proper place and function in a social order is a much worried question. It has elicited the attention or malice (or both) of his most energetic commentators. Unfortunately, the better part of the discussion it has received has been as imperceptive or downright wrongheaded as the treatment given (often by the same critics) to Isaac McCaslin, Thomas Sutpen, or the Yoknapatawpha Negroes. The cause of this confusion is not, however, obscure or unexpected; for, as we would anticipate, most Faulkner critics as men of these "enlightened" times find the idea of place repugnant and that of role foreign to the ethos of an "open society." And this generalization, with feminism as one of the stronger subspecies of our enlightenment, is especially true of any theory of the place and role of women. Without both, of course, the thematic substance of his Cycle, the concept of "endurance," and the doctrine of nature of which it is the cornerstone are, as they apply to women in the community, unintelligible; and it is within the framework of that doctrine and with reference to that role that women in the Mississippi novelist's fiction are here

to be considered. The treatment must, in its reference to particular stories, appear most sparing. My focus is, despite the ambitious title, in fact on one tale only—or rather on one story and related sections of other Faulkner fictions which give to it *solus* an especially representative and summary quality. Such selectivity is not only desirable (for reasons of economy) but also necessary; for we are overwhelmed with evidence! Faulkner is never long silent concerning the ladies. Wherefore, chosen emphasis notwithstanding, this discussion of the “horizontal” or social implications of women’s practice or avoidance of the appropriate business of their sex, endurance or failure to endure, makes some claim to be in scope—thanks to the value of my one example as an epitome—considerable. For sex, as one of the inescapable attributes of the particular condition imposed upon every mortal by the working of a mysterious and inscrutable providence, carries with it more obvious social implications for women than for men. Endurance of (or failure to endure) their assignment is more directly the issue faced by this novelist’s female characters than is “vertical” endurance, conscious affirmation of and submission to (or denial of and rebellion against) an “assigner.” Self-definition is, for them, social definition. Society is, at bottom, what they make of it.¹

¹ A representative sampling of Faulkner scholarship on the novelist’s “misogyny” should begin with Maxwell Geismar’s *Writers in Crisis* (New York, 1942), pp. 143–183. Filing later briefs as “friends” of the court (or of the plaintiff, emancipated modern womankind, in whose name Geismar waxed wroth) were Irving Howe in *William Faulkner: A Critical Study* (New York, 1962), pp. 141–144, *et seq.*; Samuel A. Yorks in “Faulkner’s Woman: The Peril of Mankind,” *Arizona Quarterly*, XVII (1961), 119–129; Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York, 1960), pp. 309–315, 321–322, and 325–330; Richard Chase in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York, 1957), pp. 64, 212–213; Irving Malin in *William Faulkner: An Interpretation* (Stanford, 1957), pp. 31–46; Katherine M.

Faulkner especially admired older women—and most particularly women born well before the turn of the century. His young women, if they are “modern,” rarely come out well. They belong to a generation perpetually “between twenty and forty,” to the age group by whom all “the world’s anguish is caused.”² Self-realization is their hue and cry. Maggie Mallison, Gavin Stevens’ sister (*Intruder in the Dust*, *Knight’s Gambit*, *Requiem for a Nun*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*); Margaret Powers (*Soldiers’ Pay*); Lucy Pate Houston (*The Hamlet*); perhaps the ladies of the Priest family (*The Reivers*); and country women, both black and white, such as Mrs. Grier (“Two Soldiers” and “Shall not Perish”); Mamie Rider (“Pantaloons in Black”); Mrs. Littlejohn (*The Hamlet* and *The Town*); Mrs. Armisted (*Light in August*); and Mrs. Wallstreet Panic Snopes (*The Hamlet* and *The Town*) are exceptions—as are a few lesser figures. But it is to the women who followed after, gave themselves to and sustained, an older social ideal, that of the family and clan culture of the old South, to whom he looks for a norm. As Cleanth Brooks puts it, Faulkner’s feelings about the role of women are “old-fashioned.”³ They seem to owe much to

Rogers in *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle, 1966), pp. 251–257; and (in a fashion less one-sided and myopic) David M. Miller in “Faulkner’s Women,” *Modern Fiction Studies*, XIII (1967), 3–14—to mention only a few.

² From Jean Stein’s interview with Faulkner in Malcolm Cowley’s edition of *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* (New York, 1959), p. 140.

³ Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (New Haven, 1963), p. 381; and again in *The Hidden God* (New Haven, 1963), p. 27. In the latter, Brooks goes so far as to describe Faulkner’s notions on this subject as “medieval.”

Anticipating Brooks (and, with him, the best of guides to Faulkner’s understanding of the place of women) is Andrew Lytle in his three review essays on his Southern contemporary, first issued in *The Sewanee Review* (Vols. LVIII, LXIII, and LXV) and now most conveniently gathered in *The*

the experiences and recollections of the novelist's youth and to observations of more recent developments rather than to any contrived illiberality or misogyny.⁴ They are, in a word, traditional: part of his inheritance as a Southerner of his class and generation. And they have their fruition and totem

Hero With the Private Parts (Baton Rouge, 1966 ["Regeneration for the Man," from 1949, on pp. 129-136; "The Son of Man: He will Prevail," from 1955, on pp. 103-128; "The Town: Helen's Last Stand," from 1957, on pp. 137-147]). Lytle discovers in Faulkner's fiction an overview of society very close to that which he embodies in his own. In a foreword to his *A Novel, A Novella, and Four Stories* (New York, 1958) he writes, "Man's attitude to woman is the foundation of society under God. In the South, because of the prevailing sense of family, the matriarch becomes the prevailing image" (pp. xxvii-xxviii). Women are the most important feature of "the body of the world," held (imperfectly even if worthily) by men in "fee simple" (*The Hero With the Private Parts*, p. 118). Such theory could as easily be proved out of *At the Moon's Inn* (Indianapolis, 1941), *A Name for Evil* (Indianapolis, 1947), and *The Velvet Horn* (New York, 1957) as from Faulkner's "The Bear," *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, *The Mansion*, *Intruder in the Dust*, *The Unvanquished*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* Concerning the more passive "conserving" to be done by ladies and the importance of their conscious participation in the system, Lytle is equally instructive. As with Judith Mebane ("Old Scratch in the Valley," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XIII [1932], 237-246) and Kate McCowan (in "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho" [*A Novel, A Novella, and Four Stories*, pp. 3-18]), their business is to restrain, confine, and make fruitful masculine energy. Usurpation—performed in the name of cowardice, presumption, or necessity (the latter, according to Mr. Lytle, the error of Rosa Millard in *The Unvanquished*)—removes the cornerstone of civil order, "the Godswear," as readily as masculine sins against the norms of husbandry.

To the same effect as Mr. Lytle's Faulkner essays and related fiction (though not specifically about either) are his recent "A Wake for the Living," *Sewanee Review*, LXXV (1967), 585-627, and an earlier paper, "Cockcrow," by his good friend Caroline Gordon, *Southern Review*, I, N.S. (1965), 554-569. Other reinforcement appears in Warren Beck's *Man in Motion: Faulkner's Trilogy* (Madison, 1961), pp. 98-137, and in Karl Zink's "Faulkner's Garden: Woman and the Immemorial Earth," *Modern Fiction Studies*, II (1956), 139-149.

⁴ John Faulkner, *My Brother Bill* (New York, 1963), p. 70. Mrs. Rogers (p. 236) blames Sigmund Freud for the antifeminism in the work of Faulkner (and in that of many of his contemporaries).

in the matriarchs, the custodianesses of the civilized life so well represented as a type in the Yoknapatawpha Cycle: Granny Millard (in *The Unvanquished*), Miss Habersham (in *Intruder in the Dust*, called Miss Worsham in *Go Down, Moses*), Judith Sutpen (in *Absalom, Absalom!*); and especially Miss Jenny Du Pre.⁵

Professor Brooks has given us convincing evidence of Faulkner's attachment to the idea of community.⁶ And women are, to repeat, natural keepers of community and of its vehicle, the family. Instinctively, they fulfill themselves through their perpetuation of these two institutions. Because of their readiness to "endure" a biologically determined function as mothers, homebuilders, and checks on male "notions," Faulkner prefers the women of an earlier South to his female contemporaries. The latter are fallen by the way to the extent that they have imbibed from the spirit of their times a more "emancipated" view of their condition and are thus transformed into "imitation" men: mere sexual objects, burdens, or decorations. True, little of his hostility to feminism is overtly stated; it is dramatized—implicit in the contrasting portraits of modern and old-fashioned women which

⁵ These white matriarchs have, of course, obvious Negro counterparts—counterparts who often play, at one time, similar roles in two worlds: Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* and "That Evening Sun"; Clytie in *Absalom, Absalom!*; Molly Beauchamp and Rider's aunt in *Go Down, Moses*; Aunt Callie in *The Reivers*; Louisiana in *The Unvanquished* and *Soldiers' Pay*; and, certainly, Elnora in *Sartoris* and "There Was a Queen."

Two other genuine matriarchs (white) who appear in Faulkner's fiction but stand outside the Yoknapatawpha cycle proper are Grandmother Ewing ("Golden Land") and Martha Demont (*The Fable*). Melisandre Backus Harriss, who becomes Gavin Stevens' wife in *Knight's Gambit* and reappears in *The Mansion*, is candidate for membership in the company but is probably too passive (or too dull) to be numbered with it.

⁶ Brooks, *William Faulkner*, pp. 69–71; 88–93; and 288–292.

dot his pages. But it is self-evident and consistent with the rest of his social thinking and general world-view. To rehearse what I have argued of the subject elsewhere, each person, age, occupation, or even each class has according to Faulkner an *a priori*, by definition, role in the human family which is community. The good of all and each depends upon the performance by each and all of his or her own role—and coincidence may expand or contract that role at particular moments.⁷ Such endurance is a hard teaching. We would expect contemporary characters to ignore it—and contemporary critics to deny its fictional validation. Even the few modern women (or girls) in Faulkner who do seem to understand what role they are stewards of are obvious anachronisms. For a time in their youth, they may possibly resemble their eternally girlish sisters. A little foolishness, usually done in the name of romance, is the natural right of all young women: a little *mad* dreaming of vicarious fulfillment through a boyish hero or even through some action of the sort which has its natural provenance with men. Moreover, the experience helps reinforce in them another, more productive, and useful natural inclination. Throughout their lives they will, by right of kind, share with all of Faulkner's females an affinity with and an understanding of the world's body—things earthly, instinctive, or even evil—and an immunity to the viruses of ideology. Because these last have in this day become more

⁷ In most detail in "Brotherhood in 'The Bear,'" *Modern Age*, X (1966), 278-281; "Faulkner, James Baldwin, and the South," *Georgia Review*, XX (1966), 431-443; "The Winding Horn: Hunting and the Making of Men in Faulkner's 'Race at Morning,'" *Papers on English Language and Literature*, I (1965), 272-278; "The Gum Tree Scene: Observations on the Structure of 'The Bear,'" *Southern Humanities Review*, I (1967), 141-150; and "All the Daughters of Eve: 'Was' and the Unity of *Go Down, Moses*," on pp. 28-37 of the previous issue of this journal.

numerous and insidious, some initiation into them may now be necessary—even to women. Nonetheless, with the appearance of children (their own or their family's—or even their society's), self-assertion, notions, daydreams, foolishness, and girlhood—all must be put away.⁸

Woman's role is, in brief, both passive and preservative; and that of men is active and creative. Faulkner knew that he would be misunderstood in this matter as in others. In interviews he repeatedly attempted to protect his work. For mere fiction cannot, he recognized, withstand the ingenious rigidities and iron formulations now brought to bear upon it. In response to a suggestion that he despised women *per se* and in explanation of his conservative attitudes concerning their genuine importance, he told a Japanese audience:

I think that as fine an influence as any young man can have is one reasonable old woman to listen to . . . because they are much more sensible than men, they have to be. They have held families together and it's because of families a race is continued.⁹

Of course, Faulkner's non-enduring females are not all moderns any more than his gentlewomen are all ante-bellum matriarchs of quality; but the preceding description of the difference between generations and concomitant evaluation of the merits and weaknesses of each is, to repeat once more,

⁸ James Branch Cabell, *As I Remember It* (New York, 1955), pp. 112–120, seems to have had an appreciation and understanding of Southern women not at all unlike that of William Faulkner. He observes (p. 112) that no wife worth submitting to seems to believe that the man who married her could have been born with “quite good sense” and he adds (p. 119) that women he has known have a “rational . . . commonsensibleness” about their sub-lunary affairs “not even granted to mere males.” They are, he concludes, never “disgusted by any just plain ordinary physical side of life” because they “learn about [it] in childhood as a matter of course” (p. 120).

⁹ Robert A. Jelliffe, ed., *Faulkner at Nagano* (Tokyo, 1956), p. 70.

sustained by the body of his fictional achievement; and it is nowhere made plainer than in his admirable and ill-treated short story, "There Was A Queen."¹⁰

¹⁰ *Collected Stories* (New York, 1950), pp. 727-744. All citations from Faulkner's works above or following are from the Random House hard-cover editions. References to short fiction are to *Collected Stories*.

In her exasperating discussion of this story (a part of her even more wrong-headed reply to the misogyny charge), "William Faulkner and the Southern Concept of Woman," *Mississippi Quarterly*, XV (1961-1962), 1-16, Elizabeth M. Kerr contends (p. 7) that it is nothing more or less than a negative judgment of the traditional Southern view of women. Her theory is that the conduct and fortune of the antagonist (Narcissa) in "There Was a Queen" is evidence of Faulkner's disenchantment with restrictive conventions concerning the place of women, conventions inherited by all Southerners of his generation. Miss Kerr, in denominating Narcissa as "the most complete example of the pure Southern woman," convinces the careful student of Faulkner of little more than her own willful stupidity—a stupidity perversely compounded by Edmond L. Volpe, in *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner* (New York, 1964), pp. 82-83, and Donald Mordecai Kartiganer, in "The Individual and the Community: Values in the Novels of William Faulkner" (Brown Univ. Unpubl. diss., 1964), *passim*: the former, on "There Was a Queen," in particular (though he is bad on everything else that objectifies Faulkner's piety); the latter, on Faulkner's social views in general. Howe (p. 263) is, reluctantly, more sensible; grudgingly he admits his own prejudice, writing (of "There Was a Queen") that "it helps one to understand Faulkner in his aspect of traditional Southerner: it is a good corrective for those critics, like the author of this book, who tend to impatience with that side of Faulkner." Olga W. Vickery is, as usual, helpful *and* misleading: appreciative of Miss Jenny and aware of Faulkner's admiration for her but wide of the mark in employing the plain-spoken old woman as a stick for beating her male kinsmen and through them, the South at large (*The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Introduction* [Baton Rouge, 1964], pp. 24-25). Brooks touches briefly but masterfully on the story, in *William Faulkner*, p. 109; his correction of the likes of Vickery, Kerr, Volpe, and Kartiganer may, however, be of even greater value (pp. 8, 33, and 90). Finally, in James B. Meriwether's indispensable dissertation, "The Place of *The Unvanquished* in William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Series" (Princeton, 1958), there are five pages (937-941) of the most perceptive commentary on "There Was a Queen" yet written. Meriwether does not undervalue the story as fiction, misconceive of its structure, or minimize its right to our attention as his subject's "darkest picture of the end of the Sartoris legend."

Miss Jenny Du Pre is the protagonist in this work and the queen of its title. She appears in more of Faulkner's stories than any other representative of her sex. At the time of "There was a Queen" she is past ninety and has for almost sixty years superintended life in the household to which she came a young widow in 1869. Strong but gentle, high-minded and self-sacrificing but undeluded by the vainglories of the men of her family, she is more than anyone else to be credited with the perpetuation of both her clan and the idea of Sartoris. And with that idea, as opposed to some measures chosen for its implementation by Sartoris men, she never quarrels.¹¹ Even the most foolish of its champions commands her loyalty—so we shall see, to the death and beyond. For it is an idea which provides her with a place and secures her dignity therein. Her antagonist, Narcissa Benbow Sartoris, the wife of her nephew's grandson, Bayard Sartoris III, is not so obviously modern as Temple Drake (*Sanctuary*), Cecily Saunders (*Soldiers' Pay*), Charlotte Rittenmeyer ("Wild Palms"), Elly (in the story of that title), or LaVerne Schumann (*Pylon*). Even so, Narcissa is self-preoccupied and self-possessed. Some twelve years earlier she had fallen in love with Bayard Sartoris, almost against her will. But she hates all men, not because (as Miss Jenny recognizes all too well) they are boys and mad fools whose perversities cannot be predicted or compulsions explained, but rather because they constitute a threat to her form of modernity, a dreamy self-absorption. She is like Allen Tate's Alice ("The Last Days of

¹¹ Despite her constant shafts at her kinsman's expense, when she tells the story of her brother's death in a quixotic gesture she salutes his spirit. Her reiterated scorn, for Sartoris males especially and all men in general, is a measure of self-defense. With it she steels herself against the losses which their foolhardiness and the pressure of barbarous times upon their sense of duty occasion.

Alice"),¹² cut off from nature in a self-created and self-maintained world of inviolate illusion.¹³ And the child which Bayard's suicidal death in the plane crash left to her care she intends to envelop in that cowardly, solipsistic world. She refuses (after first agreeing) to give him a Sartoris name ("John" is Miss Jenny's suggestion and what *she* persists in calling him) and uses instead "Benbow" after her family—respectable though never landed folk, apparently (and predictably, because of their beginnings, their lack of place) and somewhat enervated by the very malady which afflicts her.

"There Was a Queen" is in one sense a sequel to accounts of the history of the Sartoris clan and of Miss Jenny's relationship to Narcissa given in *Sartoris* and in *Sanctuary*. Narcissa is (by and large) the same person in the short story that she was in the novels, as is (entirely) Miss Jenny.¹⁴ But as

¹² *Poems*, (Denver, 1961), pp. 115–116.

¹³ *Sartoris*, pp. 259–260, 289, 356–358. Narcissa's tastes in reading about "antic worlds" and "antic people" who are outside the pale of mutability and exist where "things happen as they should" and her retreat behind "forewarned bastions" before the tales of male Sartorises with which Miss Jenny regales her after Bayard's final departure give further evidence of her escapist inclinations.

¹⁴ Perhaps only a little worse. Her perfidy in "There Was a Queen" is an extension of her earlier behavior. She appears in a relatively good light in *Sartoris*—while she is in love with Bayard III—and is particularly humanized by the experience. But she reverts; and what she suffers for love (not sex—she learns with Bayard that that alone can't touch her selfhood, learns with what consequences we soon discover) makes her an even more virulent feminine narcissist than she had been before she allowed herself to be drawn into it. Professor Brooks, in response to the darkness of her character in the story here under discussion, suggests that Narcissa may have been fundamentally changed for use in it (*William Faulkner*, p. 109). I think not. It might be more precise to say that Faulkner "completed" his portrait of her in allowing her name to fulfill its promise. Bribery by fornication seems small after the murder of Lee Goodwin (cf. *Sanctuary*, pp. 253–289; discussion

Elnora (Miss Jenny's mulatto counterpart, her housekeeper, friend, and kinswoman) observes, Virginia Du Pre never really knows Narcissa for what she is, or at least not until Miss Jenny and Narcissa have finished their last conversation. Her trouble is, to quote the undeceived Negress, "quality can't see that trash is trash or how it goes about working in with quality, because it is quality" (p. 734). Miss Jenny presupposes the presence of a certain virtue and strength in her great-great nephew's wife because Narcissa is now a Sartoris and the mother of a Sartoris and because she came to that estate by choice, knowing it entailed especial obligations. Moreover, she has refused to change that state by remarriage—has refused even after Miss Jenny advised her to remarry. The chatelaine is not accustomed to people of her own kind who have chosen to belong to it (and she knows that it is always partly a matter of choice) appearing to be what they are not. Narcissa is not an obvious climber; her motives in becoming a Sartoris are not so simple as Elnora implies—indeed, are not clear to Narcissa herself. Miss Jenny has had nothing in her experience with all varieties of women to prepare her for the peculiarly "modern" Narcissa, imagines that the girl has the willpower to act the part of a grown woman and a lady because she seems to have picked that role for herself with her chosen husband. She is, as Elnora anticipates, in for a terrible disillusionment.

Narcissa Benbow first began to visit the Sartoris house regularly and to become familiar with its lady while young Bayard was in France during the first World War. Miss

below). But in a Sartoris woman it is, nonetheless, more surprising. An aristocracy survives a little killing with ease, but not this sort of impurity in its womenfolk.

Jenny received her amiably and tolerantly, recognizing that the girl was interested in her great-great nephew long before Narcissa did so herself. All these incidents are chronicled in *Sartoris*, as are Narcissa's original reception of and reaction to the anonymous and obscene love letters which occasion all the trouble in "There Was A Queen." Byron Snopes, a clerk in the Sartoris bank, is the author of these letters. Narcissa tells Aunt Jenny about them and shows one to the older woman soon after the series commences. Miss Jenny is not surprised by the content of the letter, but suggests that Narcissa turn the matter over to the Colonel for a proper redress and then forget about it. When the Benbow girl refuses to take her advice, her hostess quickly ascertains part of the motivation of her behavior and hesitates to believe her guest's glib vow that she will burn the vile *billets-doux*, saying with "cold irony, 'Of course, you'll throw 'em right in the stove'" (*Sartoris*, p. 80). Yet she makes little of Narcissa's fascination with the letters, shrugging it off with, "I ain't twenty-six years old." Years before, on the day when her nephew faced down his father's killer without a pistol, she had told him of the special capacity of "small boys or fool young women" for self-delusion (*The Unvanquished*, p. 281). In the same spirit she can now write off Narcissa's self-deceiving pleasure in receiving love letters as an outgrowth of a tendency to romantic daydreams. But because Miss Jenny is a lady, she does not suspect that the Benbow girl's only objection to the letters is that someone else might read them and know that she has kept them and that she has made a man desire her, has enjoyed the thought that she might do so—or that they (the letters) might intrude life upon her too forcibly or too far. Narcissa enjoys playing with the idea of

being a woman, so long as she is not committed to that role.¹⁵ She comforts herself with the fact that nothing has actually happened (*Sartoris*, pp. 32–42) even though, as Mrs. Vickery insists, “her acceptance of fresh letters and her treasuring of them constitute definite though secret acts.”¹⁶ And already it is apparent that she defines respectability as a matter of “acting.”¹⁷ From this time the dimensions of her conflict with Miss Jenny and of the larger conflict which Faulkner develops through his treatment of the two women are established. Narcissa as Bayard’s wife is never woman enough for him. She will not share with him the anguish of his guilt over his brother’s death in combat or hear out his account of the day when that event occurred—an account which he has offered to share with no one else, an account which anyone who would reach him must hear and empathize with. She lacks those elemental qualities, the tenacity and affinity for things natural and for the main business for this old earth which she would need in order to pull her husband out of his guilt mania and hunger for release from “dishonor” in expiatory death—lacks the vital qualities in relationship to her husband which Faulkner’s generally admirable women (and many of their strong and wicked sisters) possess. To her marriage Narcissa brings nothing that could hold Bayard,

¹⁵ Narcissa, in her covert enjoyment of Byron Snopes’ awkward declaration of passion, is in behavior and psychology similar to Temple Drake as she appears in those portions of *Sanctuary* (pp. 56–61) which depict her adventure at the bootleggers’ hideout up to the time of her unnatural rape. Temple, like Narcissa, “plays” with a role she is more than half afraid of.

¹⁶ Vickery, p. 24.

¹⁷ Ibid. Mrs. Vickery says of Narcissa that in her character “an excessive concern with appearances takes the place of any genuine sense of ethics.” In keeping with this concern is her persistence, long after it is decorous for her to do so, in wearing white: a persistence which betokens her confirmation in narcissism.

anchor him in the steady rhythm of life. Though she has unconsciously angled for months for a proposal of marriage, she finally submits to the engagement after a wild car ride in a moment of "surrender" (*Sartoris*, pp. 262–263). This scene and much else in her conduct as it appears in *Sartoris* imply that she is incapable of a normal love response—perhaps because she will not admit that she has, and therefore can control responsibly, a sexual or emotional nature. Or else, and this conjecture is more probable, she is afraid of love, afraid of life and of the exactions it could impose upon her: afraid, not as a normally timid and innocent girl would be but, finally, with an obsessive ruthlessness.¹⁸ She brings to her marriage nothing of Miss Jenny's will to live. She (even though it is Bayard's manliness that attracts her) wants for a husband another Horace, her brother to whom she is unhealthily attached: a shelter from, not a hold on, life. She attempts to push Bayard in that direction, to make him "behave." And after a feeble attempt at meeting him halfway, epitomized in a hunting episode (*Sartoris*, pp. 28–29), preceded and followed by much sermonical talk of making Bayard "Promise," she gives her husband up even before he kills his grandfather and flees from Mississippi to die in an Ohio plane crash.¹⁹ She

¹⁸ *Sartoris*, p. 201. Miss Jenny's reply to Narcissa's prissy description of Belle Mitchell as a sexual creature is simply, "all women are."

¹⁹ Narcissa's horror at the killing of the first possum caught on that hunt goes along with her general cowardly and artificial fastidiousness about elemental matters. She is the human double of the young dog that abandons the hunt out of fear of the nameless dark "something out dar" (as Caspey, Bayard's hunting companion, describes it [*Sartoris*, p. 287]). The darkness and the hunt's bloody climax are tropes for a reality she must recognize, belong to, and contend with if she is to hold Bayard; instead she runs to the house.

For another analogue see Allen Tate's George Posey, *The Fathers* (Denver, 1950), pp. 44–45, who is embarrassed by the plantation bull about its appropriate business. Like Narcissa, he enjoys "playing" along the brink of the

seems unperturbed and almost relieved when news of his death comes back; and (as was indicated above) her return in widowhood to the narcissism which Bayard had temporarily interrupted is indicated by the name she gives to their son. She will have no more Sartorises, no more of life. To Miss Jenny's demur that Sartoris will ever be Sartoris, Narcissa smiles "dreamily, with serene . . . detachment" (*Sartoris*, p. 380). Miss Jenny takes all of this to be numbness and defensive reaction to a wound of the heart. She never comprehends the peculiarities of the marriage her great-great nephew's crash had concluded.

Narcissa is next aroused from her idyll by her brother's departure from the Benbow pattern in *Sanctuary*. Horace, in this novel a weak prototype of Faulkner's later lawyer-hero, Gavin Stevens, has, since his days of *fin de siècle* melancholy, glass blowing, and awkward adultery, come free of his old ennui and facile defeatism to act the man. He has left the wife he stole from Harry Mitchell and the obnoxious nymphette daughter he acquired in the bargain to return to Jefferson and the family home. And, because no one else seems interested in them (and because he has inadvertently become involved in their difficulties), he has undertaken the defense of Ruby Goodwin's common-law bootlegger husband. His sister is horrified, especially when he takes Ruby into his house; and then, thinking better of this first arrangement, he sets her up in a local hotel. This pleases his sister little more. Narcissa's objections to her brother's conduct are simple:

"abyss" (Tate's equivalent of Faulkner's "darkness") while pretending it isn't there (pp. 44, 185) and is "more refined" than his traditionalist antagonists (the Buchans) "but less civilized" (p. 179). However, like the later married and widowed Narcissa, his alienation from Nature finally takes the form of violence, not retreat.

Horace's actions endanger her respectability. They may require of her that she again endure some of the involvement with the world that for her had ended with Bayard's death. Miss Jenny thinks that Horace has been foolish in running away from marriage and in playing Quixote without necessary information. But she makes it plain that she does not share Narcissa's view of his legal affairs in Jefferson. However, she does understand why Narcissa is upset. The old woman explains to Horace his sister's vehemence about his involvement with the bootlegger and his family: "Do you think Narcissa'd want anybody to know that any of her folks could know people that would do anything as natural as make love or rob or steal?" (*Sanctuary*, p. 115) These observations confirm that Miss Jenny has gone beyond her evaluation of Narcissa in *Sartoris*, has detached in the girl a tendency toward self-deception and self-disguise; and they are accurate as far as they go. But they do not begin to apprehend the depths of Narcissa's narcissism.

Shortly before the old woman asks her rhetorical question, Narcissa gets Ruby put out of the hotel. Then this loving sister goes to the district attorney (Eustace Graham) with secret information about where Temple Drake is hiding and sees to it that her brother will not win his case—in effect, sees to it that Lee Goodwin will die. After frustrating his efforts in behalf of justice, she sends Horace back to a wife she openly despises in precisely the same spirit that she subsequently besmirches the name of Sartoris in "There Was a Queen." Respectability is necessary to the preservation of her half-world of white dresses and shelter from "nature" (to use Miss Jenny's term) or reality. In the concluding chapters of *Sanctuary* Miss Jenny again learns how far, to what extremes, Narcissa will go to preserve "honor," as she understands the

word: what she will permit herself to do to avoid accommodating to the body of the world, admitting finitude. But the final lesson is still to come—and soon.

The other accounts scattered throughout the cycle of the events which have already occurred in the life of Virginia Du Pre before the time of "There Was a Queen" are inferentially present in that story. The old woman's death is an epitome of her life and a solemn judgment upon the world she chooses to leave in its conclusion, the world personified by Narcissa Benbow Sartoris. The story is beautifully structured; conversations among the Sartoris Negroes, authorial narration, and brief descriptions of the activities of Narcissa which precede and follow it frame the women's encounter in the library and focus the reader's attention on that moment while they illuminate its meaning. Our perspective on the afternoon's happening is Elnora's. When he made her a Sartoris mulatto, Faulkner converted the crochety old Negress into a female Lucas Beauchamp, a peculiarly prescient and judicious spokesman or representative of her white family.²⁰ As was suggested earlier, Elnora's voice has a normative and choric function here. At this late date (*circa* 1930) in Miss Jenny's life, Elnora alone of all the members of this depleted household understands what it is which that life has been about and what a threat Narcissa has brought into it. Elnora sees right through Narcissa's disguises; the younger woman is to

²⁰ Concerning Elnora's merits, see Meriwether, p. 40. He contends that the alteration of her genealogy in "There Was a Queen" (to include a Sartoris) gives purchase and extra significance to her remarks and serves as an explanation of her peculiarly multidimensional perspective. She is twice an insider, both as a kinswoman and as a faithful retainer. Faulkner frequently makes special use of mulattoes as a "halfway house" between white and Negro worlds and seems to attribute to them (despite disclaimers to the contrary) a special insight.

her simply "town trash" (p. 729), a rootless, placeless bit of ephemera. As the story opens, the former Miss Benbow has just returned to the Sartoris home after a mysterious three-day trip to Memphis. Elnora anticipates that her reappearance will bring great pain to her mistress, a mistress whom she serves with the fiercely possessive, proprietary spirit of the old-time family Negro: "It's a Sartoris job," she says (p. 728). After the titular lady of the house (for Narcissa is now *the* Mrs. Sartoris) gathers up her son and heads out across the pasture, Elnora's anxiety for Miss Jenny intensifies and breaks forth into verbal expression, first to herself, then to Miss Jenny, and finally to her son and daughter, Isom and Saddy—an expression which also testifies to the faith the two older women share and embodies a sharp comment on its temporarily absent antagonist.

First while alone on her way to the big house from her cabin and then while about her small tasks of the early afternoon, Elnora mulls over to herself the implications of Narcissa's just-concluded absence, about some of which she is puzzled. To repeat, she assumes the responsibility for Miss Jenny's care, both physical and spiritual, even when she is not told to do so. But as the old Negress recognizes, it is not "fitten" that Narcissa should have left her elderly kinswoman by marriage with "nobody but niggers to look after her" (p. 729). She is distressed to think of Miss Jenny's sensibilities exposed to the improprieties that trash will perform, not with the thought that she herself will be incapable of performing what is needful. However, Elnora is, at this point, most of all concerned about the overtones of the mysterious trip, overtones which she has yet to fathom. She is not surprised at any indecorum from Narcissa and merely grunts when she is later told that the younger woman and Bory are

still in the pasture. And when she goes into the library where Miss Jenny sits facing her cape jasmine through the window framed by the colored glass from Carolina, Elnora discovers that her mistress shares her anxiety about Narcissa's peculiar behavior. They exchange a few words which suggest their intimacy and shared perspective. Elnora is blunt about her contempt for the subject of their conversation. Miss Jenny does not argue with her description of Narcissa as a lazy woman; and after trying to assure herself (aloud) that the young Mrs. Sartoris will be improved by the name she bears, she gives silent assent to the Negress' "She won't never be a Sartoris woman" (p. 730). Elnora declines to answer Miss Jenny's question about why mother and son went to the creek. Finally, as this scene (and Part I) of the story closes, we are presented with the tableau of the two real Sartoris women watching silently as evening fills the garden (itself an objectification of the old order) through which Narcissa and her son finally approach the house.

Part II of "There Was a Queen" (pp. 731-734) is made up entirely of Elnora's dialogue with her children as she prepares the evening meal. It proceeds organically out of the tension established in Part I and illuminates the implications of that conflict. Its subject is the true nature of quality or gentility, what constitutes or makes a gentlewoman or lady—and what does not; and therefore it contains the plainest indication of its theme to be ascertained in the story and the key to the meaning of the climax of the action which follows. The episode is dramatically effective because Saddle and Isom are, unlike their mother, outsiders to the world of Sartoris: among their own people muted counterparts of Narcissa in their confusion of values. Perhaps it is because they are young; perhaps it is because they suffer from the general

decline in character and the will to endure which infects the more recent and especially twentieth-century generations in Faulkner's fiction.²¹ In any case, Saddy and Isom see nothing to distinguish Miss Jenny's "quality" from Narcissa's "respectability." Their imperceptiveness provides the occasion for Elnora's memorable "born Sartoris or born quality of any kind aint is, it's does" (p. 732).²²

The kitchen conversation between the old colored woman and her children begins on a humorous note (which in itself should be a signal to those well read in Faulkner that he is about to speak plainly concerning matters of great weight). It is set in motion by the children's puzzlement with Elnora's perturbation. Because they go by appearances, dwell among shadows, the younger Negroes see nothing wrong between Miss Jenny and her kinswoman by marriage, detect no tension in the household, and therefore misunderstand their mother's reflections on the "blood" of their younger mistress. The transition from "blood" and breeding to "quality" is an easy one. When Isom asserts, "You and Miss Jenny think aint nobody been born since Miss Jenny," Elnora quickly responds, "Who is been?" (p. 732) and then adds that, *because* she is quality (endures circumstances, deals with what

²¹ As was suggested earlier in this essay, Faulkner's young or modern ("new") Negroes appear, for the most part, in no better light than their white counterparts. However, it should be added that his Negro women, even if contemporary, are "freer" of newfangled delusions and notions about the role of the sex than are their white sisters.

²² For a perfect parallel to Elnora's address see the dialogue on "quality" between Aunt Munsie and her daughter in Peter Taylor's "What You Hear From Em?" in *The Widows of Thornton* (New York, 1964), pp. 24-28. This black Tennessee matriarch rejects not only money and appearances as marks of status, but also good name—if not lived up to. For her there is no gentility or active virtue that is not associated with a definite place in a definite social order (p. 38). And the big city, she realizes, makes both unlikely.

is given, and is one in spirit and appearance), Miss Jenny does not complain of the wife of her great-great nephew. Elnora, to make final her judgment on Isom's stupidity, concludes: "Because Miss Jenny quality . . . and that's something you don't know nothing about, because you born too late to see any of it except her." And what her son had not seen—the difference between status as protective coloration and status as function, mere respectability and stewardship—she then illustrates with a pointed summary of Miss Jenny's biography, her trials both during the War Between the States and after, her determined confrontation of all manner of bereavement and deprivation, without the ordinary feminine luxury of tears, her hegira from Carolina (once her immediate family and hence her role there had been destroyed) to her brother's household in north Mississippi, and her persistence in both settings in the character required of her by her station. The legend, for it has assumed mythic and emblematic proportions with the passage of years, is supposed to explain to Elnora's children why Miss Jenny can be deceived and misused by the like of Narcissa. But they (the children) again prove that they belong to an uncivil breed for whom legends have no significance when they see in their mother's account nothing but errors of fact concerning the distance from Jefferson to South Carolina and the contradiction of her much reiterated indifference to Narcissa's action, her usual insistence that Miss Jenny, as Isom recalls her words, "never need nobody but you to take care of her" (pp. 733–734). With this compounding of imperception Elnora's side of the conversation ceases to be inflectionless and turns harsh and disparaging. She expands upon the character she has drawn of Narcissa in Part I of the story. The girl has, she believes, "worked on" Miss Jenny, pretended to be what she was not,

maneuvered her way into the protective cocoon of "Sartoris" through Miss Jenny, Bayard, and Bory, and is not about to fail to return to the refuge she finds in the respectability of her situation in the Sartoris household. Gentility is, in a word, an escape or disguise for Narcissa, as Elnora understands her. The girl has not and will not earn her place. The old Negress may detect more conscious malice in the early conduct of her younger mistress than the rest of Narcissa's story in the Yoknapatawpha series seems to bear out. But her comparison of the principles which take shape in the lives of the two white women, especially after the death of Bayard Sartoris III, holds up and answers questions raised at the beginning of this section of "There Was a Queen."

Elnora, as her preparation of the evening meal indicates, is concerned for the well-being ("needings") of Miss Virginia Du Pre. But her anxiety reaches out beyond the issue of what will become of one ninety-year-old lady of quality to the fate of the entire family which she too has lived only to sustain. Isom asks whether, if Narcissa is trash, her son should likewise be denominated. And with the question he touches upon his mother's deepest fear, that the Sartorises who have gone before shall have lived in vain, that their dream which was not "just Sutpen" shall have come to nothing.

"Needings," she said. "It ain't Bory's needings and it ain't her needings, it's dead folks' needings. Old Marse John's and Cunnel's and Mister John's and Bayard that's dead and can't do nothing about it. That's where the needings is. That's what I'm talking about."
(p. 734)

Through management of the dramatic potential of this scene—given the attitude of most contemporary readers—

Faulkner again shows himself to be the conscious craftsman, putting especially traditionalist sentiments in the mouth of a Negress. This strategy has always been a commonplace one among Southern writers with a conservative bent. No improvement could be made on Faulkner's management of the exchange. The reference to Bory is to the point of this kitchen conversation because it raises the question of family honor in connection with family continuity (and for Faulkner, we must remember, the two are inseparable). At the same time it prepares the reader for Part III.

With the conclusion of the dialogue with Elnora and her children, the scene of "There Was a Queen" shifts abruptly back to the library where Jenny Du Pre sits alone, awaiting some explanation of the just-concluded visit to the creek and of Narcissa's earlier trip to Memphis. The transition between the sections is here again thematic, not narrative. The tensions in which the story is grounded sustain its flow across the gap. Part III (pp. 734-742) commences, as Part II concludes, with reference to Bory, the repository of Miss Jenny's hopes of any afterlife for Sartoris (the idea and the fact). We are informed that "it was the boy [Bory] who told her [Miss Jenny]" (p. 734)—revealed to her that he and his mother had been sitting in the water—and thus forewarned her, though he himself understood nothing of what had transpired, of the darker revelations yet to come. Since coming to their house Miss Jenny has lived her life for the Sartoris men, has done so because, as she sees it, this was her duty, her place. Bory is the last of her charges and, finally, the object of her contention with Narcissa. Again, at this point as in Parts I and II of this story, the plants in the garden beneath the library window and the colored glass panes in that window through which the old woman meditates upon them

move into the scene to play a part in its action. They are the living symbols of what their owner has lived for and expects Bory to perpetuate beyond her death, a certain quality or unbought grace of life which is more than ornamental or "merely" beautiful, a gracious and self-sufficient superiority to the caprice of fortune which secures itself intact as it functions to give local habitation to the Sartoris dream of community. Miss Jenny takes comfort from the Cape Jasmine and elegant glass panes. Whenever she is beset by troubles, their look is reassuring. They objectify what she has accomplished with her life, the maintenance of a willed continuity from South Carolina and Virginia to the West, a continuity that binds up the private exertions of Miss Jenny and those of all her kind from the South's colonial beginnings eastward on into the semi-frontier atmosphere of Mississippi, and (if our suggestions may be extended still further) links all these ladies in their civilization and order-bringing errand into the wilderness. Together they indicate the validity and the vitality of her tradition, the perseverance of the past in her person.²³ Faulkner's dwelling upon them is not coincidental or mere Southern window dressing and sentimentality; it is functional: like much else in his fiction, an employment, for the most serious purposes, of a familiar facet of the life he knows best. The role of the jasmine in Part III of "There Was a Queen" is particularly substantial and evocative. It especially helps to sustain the reader's focus on Bory and on

²³ It is yet the custom in the South among women of good family for a daughter, upon marriage, to take a sprig of jasmine from her mother's garden to plant at her new home. I am indebted to Dr. W. A. Tornwall, a native Mississippian, for an enlightening explanation of the meaning of flowers and shrubs to the ladies of his state. According to Dr. Tornwall, the Cape Jasmine is, of all plants, the one we should expect to find on the grounds of a plantation or town house presided over by a lady of Miss Jenny's upbringing.

Bory's fate, the most significant question before the household—and on the definition of quality established heretofore by Elnora as that definition bears upon the nurture of the very mutable but “sweet-smelling” plant, civil order (*i.e.*, the “garden”), whose instrument Bory is supposed to become. In effect, Bory and the jasmine are, for Miss Jenny, homologous.²⁴

Before Bory comes down to her, Miss Jenny alone continues the summary of Narcissa's conduct commenced in response to Elnora's already discussed “She won't never be a Sartoris woman.” She remembers Narcissa's early visits with her in the garden below, her unannounced engagement to Bayard, and the first appearance of the obscene letters. She recalls in detail (in the version slightly different from that given in *Sartoris* and already discussed above) her conversation with Narcissa when the younger woman brought a letter out—and the girl's refusal to show it to Old Bayard; she also recalls how Narcissa promised to burn it. Her recollections then move on to the intervening years during which the two women have lived alone in the great house with the little boy

²⁴ H. L. Weatherby, in an essay printed since the preparation of this study, has anticipated my attribution of iconographic significance to Faulkner's gardens—though without reference to “There Was a Queen”—in “Sutpen's Garden,” *Georgia Review*, XXI (1967), 354–369. In Weatherby's view, the parodic garden at Sutpen's Hundred (in *Absalom, Absalom!*)—especially Faulkner's failure to make full use of its symbolic potential—is proof of the Mississippian's ignorance of traditional tropology: proof, in fact, of his ignorance of “Christian doctrine and theology.” As this writer perceives it, “There Was a Queen” indicates, to the contrary, that Faulkner *does* know his images and how to deploy them. Sutpen's garden differs from Miss Jenny's as does his purpose in life from hers; as does sterility so absolute that it is unaware of the existence of grace from the plenitude that benison once guaranteed. It is consistent for Faulkner to mute in the one fiction what he asserts in the other (*i.e.*, Eden restored). To do otherwise would be to destroy the coherence of both.

and their servants, a time recently broken by Narcissa's inexcusable unannounced introduction to the Sartoris table of an outlander, the arrogant balding Eastern Jewish employee of the hated enemy (*i.e.*, the impersonal, busybody spirit of modern government) and her subsequent two-day visit to Memphis. Miss Jenny is obviously beginning to answer some of her own questions when Bory comes in and announces, "We been in the creek . . . just sitting . . . all evening" (p. 727). The boy offers to remain with his great-great-great aunt but is sent out just as Narcissa enters and begins to speak. "It was those let—" she exclaims; but Miss Jenny, seemingly prepared (or preparing) for the worst, interrupts: "Wait. Before you begin. The jasmine. Do you smell it?" (p. 738) Narcissa tries again and Miss Jenny interrupts once more, insists on establishing this specific historical and ethical context for their forthcoming exchange: "Wait. Always about this time it begins. It has begun about this time of day in June for fifty-seven years this summer. I brought them from Carolina, in a basket. I remember how that first March I sat up all night, burning newspapers about the roots. Do you smell it?" Then, fortified by the familiar fragrance, she ventures to guess at what announcement Narcissa is about to make.²⁵ Though it would be for her—has been for her—an unavailable alternative to prolonged widowhood, she is still prepared for Narcissa to remarry, even a Yankee federal agent.²⁶ Her

²⁵ For confirmation of my insistence on the significance of her flowers in Miss Jenny's life, see the final pages of *Sartoris* (379–380) where she revives, in the presence of a strong aroma of jasmine, from her despair at the death of Bayard III—revives to plan again for the future of her people.

²⁶ Doc Loosh Peabody gave her a chance (*Sartoris*, p. 295); she refused, but appreciated the offer. Perhaps Miss Jenny's reluctance to remarry was a case of romantic loyalty; or then again, perhaps she was too much like James Branch Cabell's Grandmother Branch, who, at such a prospect, declared that

earlier encouragement of Narcissa in this course was half-hearted; but she has been ready to bear a remarriage because such is a thing of nature to which she has resigned herself. But Narcissa's reply is, "... it's not that bad." Miss Jenny can imagine no other explanation for the visit to Memphis after the appearance of the unwelcome guest with the Phi Beta Kappa key.

"You'll have to tell me then," she succumbs. With this Narcissa recommences:

It was those letters. Thirteen year ago. Don't you remember? Before Bayard came back from France. Before you even knew we were engaged. I showed you one of them and you wanted me to give it to Colonel Sartoris and let him find out who sent it and I wouldn't let you do it and you said no lady would permit herself to receive anonymous love letters no matter how badly she wanted to." (p. 739)

She continues, covering the whole sordid business—her promise to burn the letters, her concealment of them, their continued arrival, her marriage, and their theft, and finally, her subsequent agony at their circulation in the world before the eyes of strange men. However, she concludes, she had

she could not remarry because anyone who was so little a gentleman as "to take another man's leavings" was beneath her (*As I Remember It*, p. 144).

Evidence that Narcissa may have considered remarriage appears in *Sanctuary* (pp. 23–27), where she entertains the attentions of various young men—Gowan Stevens for one. A "tame" mate could serve her purposes very well, if she weren't the Widow Sartoris. For sex alone, as was argued earlier, is no danger to her "cocoon." A half-man, one who "could be mistaken for a Mississippian on a dancefloor" (and nowhere else), could be an adjunct to her inviolable selfhood—*absorbed*, as was her brother, and as her husband and her son might have been had they not been Sartorises. But Gowan is too little man even for these purposes; and besides, she doesn't need him or his predecessors except as decorations. Moreover, she has been "burned" by marriage already. It is unpredictable. For her it will be a last resort.

Bory. With his arrival and her husband's death, she ceased to think of the letters—until “. . . that man came out to see me, that Jew” (p. 740). Now came the threads together. The man was a treasury agent, long on the case of the bank clerk-bank robber Byron Snopes (the author of the love letters and the person who had stolen them from her shortly after she was married). He (the Yankee) had come to see Narcissa to determine if she knew anything concerning the whereabouts of her would-be paramour, not to persecute her. The contents of the letters was a matter of no importance to him; but he *was* going to “turn them in to the department.” This information stirs in Narcissa all the old fears that had troubled her upon the original theft of her disgraceful treasures. She will be thought of, read about, by numberless anonymous men. The real, mutable, and turbulent world she has since Bayard's death shut out will once more impinge upon her carefully cultivated shelter, interrupt her self-regarding pre-occupations. This idea is too much for her. And, with the same monstrous calm with which she betrayed her brother to Eustace Graham, she tempts the agent to violate his oath of office with the promise of the Memphis assignation. This bargain is consummated, the letters returned and burned, and the lips of the alien interloper concerning Narcissa's perfidy thereby sealed forever.

Narcissa's narration is calm, even languid; and the assurance with which she utters her usual contemptuous judgment of men as fools—that they are “all about the same, with their ideas of good and bad”—when taken with her statement that she “had to do it” is evidence that she feels no guilt, no compunction, about her whoredom. Indeed, she assures Miss Jenny, “I would have done more than that” (p. 741). And we believe her! Once finished, she yawns and stretches. She has,

she imagines, proved her loyalty to Bory and the matriarch; and she takes satisfaction from the idea that all is settled because she has arranged matters in such a way that no one can inform upon her. Moreover, she has made ritual expiation for her impurity by sitting with her son—an inadvertent irony, for he too and all his house are besmirched by that impurity (the real reason why Miss Jenny or any other lady of her class would be horrified by any such unchastity)—in what Miss Jenny describes knowingly as a “back-pasture Jordan” (p. 741). There is no contrition in the narrative, only boredom. She expects the chatelaine to accept its logic (and watery aftermath) as self-evident. This last gesture of expiation is Narcissa’s sole concession to the reality of her misdeed; but her pleasure in it serves only to certify to the reader the depravity of her conception of respectability as sanctuary. It is a formal concession, part of the world of surfaces and appearances in which she dwells; and it removes her further from the spirit of “does, not is” than has her sin itself.

Well before Narcissa has finished her telling, however, Miss Jenny has heard all that she needs or wants to hear. With Narcissa’s announcement that the agent *had had* the letters, the narrative of “There Was a Queen” turns. Miss Jenny repeats it aloud—twice and with emphasis—to insure that she has not mistaken her kinswoman by marriage. Apart from the assertion running throughout Faulkner’s chronicle of the Sartoris family that no male of that family has ever been molded—reformed or corrupted—by a woman, and from the good impression that we have from the story itself of Bory’s character, his Sartoris independence, hold on reality, and affection for Virginia which (together) should shield him from his mother’s influence, we are at this point given to understand that Narcissa has won out.

Miss Jenny can no longer bear to live with her and has no reason to believe she can accomplish anything by doing so! Moreover, to continue would be (since she has survived so long only by determination to protect her "garden") to endorse tacitly Narcissa's variety of "respectability." Jasmine cannot easily overcome the new aroma which overhangs the house of Sartoris. But it can define the "intruder" for what it is: a bad smell. The old woman is too well bred to berate her great-great nephew's widow; yet when Narcissa offers to help her after she has called out sharply for "Johnny," she refuses her emphatically: "No. Call Johnny. I want my hat." Their last tie is broken.

Miss Jenny du Pre, a lady of quality, is going on a journey. And like any lady of her breeding—Miss Habersham in her errands of mercy in *Go Down, Moses* and in *Intruder in the Dust*; Granny Millard in her call upon the commander of the Yankees to recover her Negroes, mules, and silver—Miss Jenny must go properly attired in the armor of her station. But she will have the final courtesy from her kin, of whom Johnny is now the last that she will acknowledge. Narcissa has rid herself of one more Sartoris. By her own choice, Miss Jenny is left alone, erect in the wheel chair before her favorite window, with her hat on, looking out upon her special garden. Its durability consoles her as does the thought of Bory. They will now have to fend for themselves—and will do well enough. Her departure from life, like the rest of it, will be an act of will, an act well calculated to set a valedictory example.

The significance of Miss Jenny's call for her hat escapes Narcissa and her son. In Part IV (pp. 742–744) of "There Was a Queen," we see them at table, oblivious of what is transpiring down the hall. It has long been the custom of the old

woman thus to require a headpiece when she wishes to compose herself. And besides, there is much which Narcissa wishes to say to Bory. With Miss Jenny not present, she moves him from the head of the table (the seat of *the* Sartoris, his seat since the death of his father and great-grandfather and [if he occupies it] the symbol of his assumption of the role to which he was born in the house of his fathers) to a chair beside her own, thus continuing in the character which she has more calamitously exhibited in the just-concluded and defended trip to Memphis. The rearrangement of the seats for dinner is still further evidence that Narcissa intends to unman her son, to make of him a substitute for his namesake uncle, what his father had declined to become, a co-inhabitant of the world behind the looking-glass. She is unquestionably a minion of this world and has no understanding of the proper role of her own sex or that of Bory as the Sartoris heir. But the boy, we are here as before given to understand (by his courtesy to Aunt Jenny and by his tolerant but disengaged puzzlement at his mother's afternoon amusements), is as immune to Narcissa's plea of "promise, promise" as was his father (p. 742). The garden will be in good hands, the order it epitomizes. All that will be necessary to its fruitful cultivation will be a woman for Bory, a woman like his Aunt Jenny.

The scene is depressing and reassuring. It clarifies the meaning of the library interview as do the earliest portions of the story. It completes a frame around that episode. Admittedly it says to us that Narcissa will do her worst to destroy Sartoris; but as Elnora and Miss Jenny have been delighted to tell each other earlier (pp. 730-731), and as we can now gather for ourselves, Bory is *really* a male Sartoris, who will "never miss nobody"—never be dependent upon anyone or

anything for a crutch, or be swallowed up by the schemes of any mere woman.²⁷

Done with this exchange, the author moves back to the other half of the household where the principle of social order will continue to receive active feminine support. Isom returns to the kitchen from serving dinner. His mother questions him about what he had heard of the conversation in the library. His reply is fragmentary and misleading; but Elnora, with a flash of prescience, "appeared to listen to something beyond" (p. 743). Then she moves with deceptive swiftness up the hall, past the room where Narcissa continues to ply her son, to stop and recognize at a distance but without a doubt what she had feared and expected to discover. After a moment's grief and faint singsong appeal to heaven, she retraces her steps to the dining room doorway. "You'd better come quick, I reckon," she said, in that soft cold peremptory voice" (p. 744). Virginia du Pre is dead. There is no defiance of nature or flight from place in her decision to seek no more "postponements." She has endured long enough and has persisted in setting before those younger than herself a paradigm

²⁷ It may seem curious to some modern readers that Elnora and Miss Jenny are delighted by what others might take to be the coldness and indifference of male Sartorises to female "hovering." Such imperceptions can easily be explained away, however, with a simple formula, a formula to which Faulkner seems to give assent: the man who "needs" a woman too much is probably unworthy of her. Meriwether (p. 40) seems to miss the mark in commenting on Bory. He imagines that in the structure of "There Was a Queen" there appear indications of his future bad character. They are there; but they refer not to Bory specifically, but rather to the world in which he will grow up. That Bory comes to his full manhood (as a daring soldier and a mighty hunter) we learn in *The Town* (p. 244), *The Mansion* (p. 206), and *Knight's Gambit* (pp. 239-240). And we are told nothing to indicate that Narcissa affected him as she had intended. That Faulkner never expected for us to imagine that she could is indicated by revisions which he made in the final draft of *Sanctuary* (Meriwether, pp. 30-31).

even in the manner of her departure. Moreover, in her submission to death she has her only opportunity to witness once more with effectiveness (the only strategy suitable for the education of "gentlefolk" by "gentlefolk") against what Narcissa has done and would do. Others (sadly less well equipped by station, insight, or strength of character) will have to pick up after her. And therefore our sense of loss at Miss Jenny's passing is genuine—involving with it a little of Faulkner's elegiac feeling about the decline of her culture. A mighty house is fallen low, a perfection lost forever. Yet the Narcissas of the world, we are made confident, are dead already—and cannot harm anyone or anything that amounts to much. The saving remnant will, like Faulkner, remember, revere, and recover.

Almost everything that Faulkner believes about the importance of women as the pillars or destroyers of community is implicit in "There Was a Queen" and in the Miss Jenny-Narcissa antithesis.

Not all of Faulkner's non-enduring females have an obvious resemblance to Narcissa. Some, like Addie Bundren or Charlotte Rittenmeyer, are not at all afraid—or not afraid of the same things. And they are not always narcissistic. Their escapism is aggressive and involves an Icarian rejection of their place as too low. In brief, they are the children of pride. Their disruptive impact on the social order is the side effect of a more serious malady of the spirit. But Narcissa is somewhat like them when she *acts*.

On the other hand, some of Faulkner's non-enduring females are even more passive than Narcissa; their non-endurance carries no vertical implications. They represent humility devoid of any tincture of pride. In so far as they are conscious agents, Narcissa resembles them clearly—not the

special bovine group (early Eula, Lena Grove, the woman rescued by the convict in "Old Man") who appear at times in the Yoknapatawpha fiction to stand outside the categories of praise and blame, and usually turn out well enough when they set aside their instinctive passivity.

But all of Faulkner's "natural" women who are *both* proud and humble in "doing the best they can" with their sexually determined role in a given world are like Virginia du Pre. They may not have her manner; and their sense of their role may not be as pronounced as hers. But their character is the same, their strength and their dependability. Status and function are one in their eyes. Mrs. Grier's shoes to be put on at the edge of town ("Shall Not Perish") and Miss Habersham's gloves or Miss Jenny's hat indicate that they are three of the same species, operating (as does Elnora) at the level and in the situation left to their keeping by providence. The decorums are important to all of these ladies—the rules that define their place; and they will do whatever is necessary to see them observed, to keep the "garden" in bloom. They will not wince; and they will usually accomplish most of what they intend.

THREE POEMS

BY ELLEN BRYANT VOIGT

AMERICAN CERAMICS

*What is it in a clay body
that makes it turn brown
when fired under intense heat,
makes its insides black or gray
(if you crack it open).*

Makes the right wing
dry up, crunch.
The left leg falls off whole,
eyes come off like buttons.

One winter I bent down
for a spot of gray
no bigger than a duck's eye
and wore it above my nose for weeks.
Others go without food,
give up fornication
out of fear or just caution.
But spring will always come,
even to Iowa,
and birds come back;
the loud and insane summers
rag in to daisies.
No stopping that heat.

LAST NIGHT

Last night
there were caterpillars lying
in the hammocks of your eyes.
But the king had sent up
to Great Neck for some music;
the noise drove us to fits.
After that,
I crocheted a while,
made some talk about festoons,
became a chocolate eclaire
big as a bear
and you began to eat,
eat.

ON A PIECE OF ORIENTAL SCULPTURE

Whose face is this—
whose indeed,
come to rail
against the random
order of books
on the shelves,
come all the way
to this remote place
in Iowa,
removed from
some excessive kingdom?

Was she the favored concubine,
whose hands were birds
flying against the
tight leashes of
her small wrists?
What dynasty rose
from the blue veins
inside her elbow,
watercolor on silk?
Or, were these holy eyes?
Was she maintained in ritual,
hundreds prostrate
on marble or
in the fabulous wars?
Imagine her courts, temples:
brocade issuing from her shoulders

The head, blue and polished,
the primal head
is here,
served up now on my shelf,
its ancient situation
sliced away,
attended only by the books
which are at once
more real,
and less pertinent,
than she.

TWO SECTIONS OF *JASON*, A NEW NOVEL

BY WARREN LEAMON

ANDREW

YOUR conventions will kill you." The words ran once again through Jason's mind as he lay on the bed in the rising light of morning. And yet he fancied himself a man with very few conventions, very few prejudices. He lit another cigarette. Joan had her eye on Andrew last night, he thought.

In college Andrew and Jason had been in the same fraternity and Jason had gotten to know him fairly well. There were times when he could consider Andrew objectively, as a minor part of the vast network of men and women who make up the everyday life and activity of Atlanta—the part that in some way controls all the rest. This explained his indifference and his ignorance. For ever since Jason had known him, Andrew had never once seemed curious about anything but the immediate—and that made him no different from most of the people Jason knew. Indeed, no different from most of the people he had grown up with. Andrew and Jason had both grown up in Atlanta, but of course they had never known one another. Andrew had lived on the northwest side of town, had gone to prep schools and had entered the University only because his grades were too bad for even the

mainline Eastern schools to accept. On the other hand, Jason had lived on the Northeast side of town, had gone to public schools and had entered the state university because he could afford nothing else. When they met, they had nothing in common; they might have been from different countries rather than from two different parts of a city. It had taken Jason years to come to grips with Andrew's character: at first he had thought him witty, then stupid, then immoral. He had gone through a period of pitying him, which had not lasted long. Now he assumed that Andrew was what people meant when they said sophisticated or modern or lucky. This, he realized, was a feeble explanation, but he relied on it heavily, for it told him the difference between himself and Andrew was not one of degree but of kind—it could not be explained by more money, more influential friends, not even by different upbringing.

All this Jason considered an objective consideration of Andrew; but on mornings such as this he could not get that other consideration out of his mind. It was only one incident, an isolated one, but it nagged him as steadily as changes in the weather—like that other incident of childhood: William and Arthur. Jason was a man who dwelt much in the past and worried much about the future, but these two events were lodged most unshakably in his mind.

Hog was there, of course, and Cody. And Andrew was to come later, after he took Nan back to the sorority house. The Mitchell Bridge Inn-MBI, which had become their spring haunt, was far out on the Old Atlanta Highway, about five miles from Athens, home of the state university. It was a run-down frame building near the Oconee River, resting in the middle of what had been rich farm land. There was a bar (beer only) and several old wooden tables and chairs and a

juke box. Before the college crowd had taken over that spring, it had been exclusively the haunt of farmers and people who still lived on the farms but worked at the various factories in Athens. A few of them still came in, stood at the bar and drank and looked generally bewildered by the drunken antics of the students. But it was Wednesday night and there were no students in the Inn except Jason, Hog and Cody. Several farmers stood at the bar in their work clothes and drank their beer with dry cracked lips and scarred red hands. The three young men sat at a table by the window and talked and watched the sun fall behind the fallow fields.

"This was all plantation land once," said Jason.

"Here? In Athens? I don't believe it."

"It's true; Athens was in the old black belt."

"Then there must have been slaves."

"There were, but it was called the black belt because of the rich black topsoil that was so good for cotton. Most all of this land was in cotton; the first cotton mill in the state was in Athens."

Cody looked at his watch. "Andrew should be here by now."

They were not drunk; they had been drunk day and night since the weekend, but that morning they had tapered off and now fatigue and irritation were setting in. They sipped their beer slowly. Cody had tilted his chair against the wall and stretched his six feet-four inch frame out full length; Hog's fat round body was twisted slightly in his chair and he held his beer against his stomach. Jason sat with his elbows on the table staring out the window.

The farmers and ex-farmers at the bar talked about the weather and about various mutual acquaintances: someone beat his wife, someone wrecked his car, someone was now a

successful stock car driver. Occasionally someone would tell an old joke and all the men would laugh loudly, pound each other on the shoulders, and gulp their beer.

"Damn rubes," muttered Hog under his breath.

Jason watched an old Hudson pull in the dirt parking lot outside, followed closely by another car, which he recognized as Andrew's. The dust from both cars swirled up into the early evening air—already the fields were falling under a shroud of blackness and the warmth of the April day was giving way to the chill of early spring nights.

Andrew was greeted quietly by all save Hog, who shouted his usual greeting, "Handy Andy the whore hopper!"

"Hold it down, Hog," he said, cocking his head toward the bar. "We're outnumbered tonight." He was referring to last week's brawl between students and locals.

Jason kept his eyes fixed on the Hudson; in the fading light he could make out a man and a woman in the car. She was in the back seat and he leaned over the back of the front seat to talk to her. They seemed to be arguing—she shook her head violently and he slapped her sharply. His head disappeared below the dashboard and reappeared a moment later. He handed her something—a bottle—and she turned it to her lips. The man got out of the car and started across the parking lot toward the Inn.

"Sorry I was late," said Andrew. "I had to follow that junk heap all the way out here." He pointed out at the Hudson.

The door opened and the man entered; he was short and thin and walked with quick, jerky strides. His black hair was covered with grease which sparkled in the rising light of the Inn and was combed straight back along the sides of his head. A narrow mustache cut a straight black line between nose and upper lip. He wore a bright sport shirt which was open

wide at the neck, and tight, tapered Italian pants. His shoes were shiny black.

“Christ,” said Cody. “Who is that?”

“Looks like the pimp in a Bogart movie,” said Jason.

The man paused at the door and looked the room over: first at the men at the bar, who glanced at him briefly and went back to their beer and conversation; then at the four students. He went to the bar, got a beer and paid for it, and walked over to Jason’s table.

“How are you boys tonight?” he asked, and a broad grin split his face into perfect horizontal lines.

They looked at him and shrugged their shoulders.

“Been having any nigger trouble around here?”

His clipped Northern accent echoed from the walls, and although the curiosity of all four of the young men was aroused, they still said nothing.

“Keeping quiet, huh? I don’t blame you. With everybody in the country trying to tell you what to do, you have to keep cool, huh?”

“We try to,” said Cody. And he smiled at the others.

“Mind if I join you?”

“Help yourself,” said Andrew.

The man pulled up a chair and sat down by Jason; he reeked of scent—a sweet after-shave lotion or deodorant or both.

“My name is Scarletti. Tony Scarletti.” He held out his hand. The young men shook it indifferently and muttered their first names. “I’m from up North.”

“No kidding,” said Cody.

He smiled. “I guess you could tell that, huh? But don’t get me wrong. I like it down here. I plan to settle somewhere in

the Old South. I'm from the Old South too, you know; Southern Italy. Hah, ha."

"And where in the Old South do you plan to settle?" asked Jason. "Miami?"

"That would be nice. I'm on my way there now. —Say, can I buy you boys a drink?"

"Sure," said Hog.

He ordered four beers.

"Like I was saying, don't get me wrong. I like it down here. I'm sick of the North. And let me tell you," for some unknown reason he lowered his voice, "we don't like niggers any more than you do. And besides that, we got something worse—Puerto Ricans."

"Something worse than niggers," asked Cody, and his tilted chair came down to the floor with a bang. "Porto what?"

"Ricans. Spics. Spaniards. You know."

"Gollee. Something worse than niggers. Do you hear that?" Cody swung his glance to each of his three friends."

"I always thought Spics were Italians," said Hog.

"No. That's Dagos," said Cody. "At least I think so. Is that right Mister? We ain't so bright down here you know."

The man looked confused and attempted to cover it with his knife-like smile.

"I don't like all this talk about niggers," said Jason. "I'm one fourth Negro you know, and I don't like it."

"Now wait a minute fellows. I didn't . . ." he stopped and thought for a moment. "I see. You're pulling my leg. Aren't you?" He laughed. "You had me worried for a moment there. He relaxed and settled down in his chair. "It's good to find a place in the world where there's still good witty conversation left. Are you boys students at the University?"

Heads nodded.

"I'm a college man myself. CCNY. But I quit after two years. Biggest mistake I ever made. Say, I bet you've got a lot of pretty women at the University. I bet you boys get a lot, don't you?"

"Every night," said Andrew. "A different place every night. I'm sick of it."

"I had two women before I came here tonight," said Cody. "It's getting to be boring."

"Not me," said Jason solemnly. "I have taken a vow of chastity."

"You're going to be a priest?" asked Scarletti. "I have a brother who is a priest."

"It is a hard life but a rewarding one."

Scarletti studied Jason for a moment. "Oh, for Christ sake, stop kidding me, will you? I'm serious. I want to know." He leaned forward and lowered his voice once again. "I'll bet you're pretty horny right now, aren't you?"

They said nothing.

"I've got a woman in the car." He leaned back and let the words take effect.

"So," said Andrew.

"And I'll tell you something else. She's my wife."

The young men looked at each other. Now who was pulling whose leg?

"That's right. My wife. Does that surprise you?"

"Why should it?" asked Jason. "A lot of men travel with their wives."

"You boys know what I'm talking about. Don't play dumb. She's my wife, so I can vouch for her. She's good. How would you boys like to try her out?"

"For free, I suppose," said Hog.

"Now be reasonable." He leaned forward again. "I'll let you in on something. I'm broke. The syndicate ran me out of New York, where I had a sweet little protection racket and"

"Holy shit," said Cody. "Cut it out. Don't you think we go to movies, too?"

He smiled. "All right. I forgot that you're college men. Anyway, I'm broke and I have to get to Miami. So for a small price I'm willing to let you boys have a little."

"What's the price?" asked Andrew.

"Fifteen dollars a piece."

"An appropriate pun," said Jason.

"Too much," said Hog.

"Too much? I tell you, she's good."

"Too much."

"All right, ten dollars."

They said nothing.

"She's Italian. Hot blooded. I guarantee you, you've never had anything like it."

Still they said nothing.

"I'll go back outside and wait. If you decide you want some come on out." He winked. "You never had better."

After he was gone they sat and drank their beer; Jason stared out the window but it was dark now and he stared into a wall of blackness.

"What do you think?" asked Hog.

"Too much," said Cody. "I don't have ten dollars."

"Do you reckon he was telling you the truth?" asked Andrew.

"About what?"

"I mean, do you think it's really his wife?"

"Who knows. Judging from what we know of him I wouldn't doubt it."

It all seemed unreal to Jason; he wondered if the man had really come into the Inn at all, or if he had just imagined it. Maybe the blackness has swallowed up the car, man and woman and all, he thought. He was dead certain he would never be a party to what the man was selling, but all the same he was very glad he did not have ten dollars.

A chair scraped against the floor. Andrew had stood up.

"I'm going to try it," he said.

"Don't be a fool. It's not worth it."

"How do you know? You haven't seen her."

"But I've seen him."

Andrew hesitated for a moment, staring not at his friends but at the man at the bar, who seemed to be totally ignorant of what was going on behind them. "Ah, what the hell," he said, and started for the door.

"What the hell's gotten into him?" asked Cody after he had left the Inn.

"He's just horny," said Hog, who for the life of him had a hard time ever seeing past the obvious, and consequently was right most of the time about things like this. At least so it seemed to Jason at this moment.

"No," Cody went on. "He seemed strange tonight. Too quiet."

"Maybe he had an argument with Nan."

"He's always having arguments with Nan; they never bother him."

"Then maybe his parents have been down on him again."

"That's possible."

"He's just horny," said Hog.

They waited in silence, each man visualizing in his own

way what was going on outside in the parking lot. Jason's own conception was of a dark emaciated woman, grimly performing a duty which was expected of her.

The bartender washed glasses, the men at the bar drank and talked, Jason, Hog and Cody fingered their glasses and stared alternately at the clock and at the window which opened onto an ever-deepening wall of blackness. The surrealism of the scene bored deeply into Jason: a normal country bar juxtaposed sharply against the black and white world of car, pimp, and prostitute just outside, not fifty feet away. Suddenly, for Jason, it became a dream—later he blamed it on the week of drinking, fatigue, worry—but whatever, suddenly all movement slowed down, arms inched up to mouths and inched back to the bar, sounds, words became enlarged to twice, three times their normal size and the whole room turned black and white, filled with curling twisting smoke. And then there were no sounds, no movement, just motionless black and white figures in a tomblike black and white silence. And it went on until Jason wanted to shout, tried to shout, to shatter the stillness. But he remained motionless, silent for what seemed hours. And they waited, frozen.

What the scream was like Jason tried often to describe, but he could never quite do it. Once, late at night on a lake he had heard a wildcat scream far away on a distant mountain. But this scream was louder, more piercing, and worst of all, for all its eeriness, unmistakably human. And it was followed by another scream. And then another. The dream ended; bodies at the bar turned, not toward the screams but toward Jason and his friends.

"What was that?" asked Hog.

But Cody was already up and heading for the door, half walking, half running. Jason followed him, two steps behind.

The men at the bar did not move; they had seen the man go out, followed by Andrew; it was none of their business and they meant to keep it that way.

Outside, the blackness covered them like water; they knew the general direction of the car and they ran in that direction while trying to adjust their eyes to the blackness. The old Hudson appeared to the right, at first nothing more than a vague outline. But as he approached it Jason could make out a body lying on the gravel beside the car, which was rocking violently. Another scream rose and was lost in the nothingness of farmland and deserted highway. Scarlett heard them coming.

“Crazy. He’s gone crazy. Do something.”

Jason gave him no more than a glance as he passed but he saw blood on his head. He arrived at the back door of the car, which was standing open, an instant before Cody. It was difficult to tell exactly what was going on. There were two bodies on the back seat and the one on top was unmistakably Andrew’s, stripped to undershorts. All that was visible of the other body was the face, which was blue, the eyes bulging. And then Jason saw why: Andrew’s hands were clasped around her neck.

“Andrew! Stop!” He reached in with both hands, grabbed him by the shoulder and jerked as hard as he could. But the shoulders were covered with sweat (despite the chilly spring air—Jason noticed that. In the middle of everything it occurred to him that Andrew should not be sweating in such cold air.)

“Quick!” shouted Cody, “before he kills her.” They both reached in, jamming each other against the sides of the door, and they grabbed for any part of his body they could get a grip on. “Now pull,” shouted Cody, and they both heaved up

and out. Arms twisted, heads banged and somehow both bodies came out of the car, or rather fell out onto the loose dirt and gravel. Andrew's hands were still clamped tightly around the woman's neck. Cody, in desperation, leaned over and bit one arm; blood spurted, Andrew hollered and loosened his grip. Immediately Jason, who had him around the waist, pulled him back away from the woman. "What's the matter with you?" Jason shouted into his ear as he struggled to get free.

"Let go! Lemme go!"

Jason tightened his grip. "Why? What's wrong?"

"Just look at her. Look!"

Jason did look; the girl lay on the gravel on her back, completely naked. She made no attempt to cover herself against either the cold night air or the eyes of the men. She was dark, he noticed, maybe a bit too dark for a "hot-blooded Italian."

"Why, she's a nigger," a voice behind him, Hog's voice, said.

So that's why he went berserk, thought Jason, but he noticed that Andrew had calmed down and seemed curious about something. "A nigger," he muttered. "Is she a nigger?"

"No," said Scarletti, who was now leaning against the hood of the car.

"Then what the hell is she?" asked Hog.

"Where are her clothes?" asked Cody. "It's cold out here." He went over to the car, found her dress and brought it back to her. But she continued to lie on the ground, motionless, and—Jason noticed—clutching something at her neck, something attached to a thin necklace which hung around the rising redness of her neck.

"Put on your clothes," said Cody.

She looked at him. "Why? Don't you want a little? Don't

you and your friends all want a little? Is this the way you get your kicks?"

"You little whore," said Andrew.

"You white dirty bastard. Here you white bastard, here it is." Her hand moved down between her legs. "Directly below this." Her other hand, the hand at her neck, opened, and revealed a cheap gold cross.

Suddenly Andrew's whole body convulsed with rage. Jason tightened his grip and hung on for dear life, not knowing if he could hold him back.

"There it is," he shouted as he struggled. "Do you see it? There it is. She wouldn't take it off."

Jason heaved him around and slammed him against the side of the car. When he tried to move he slammed him again and again until he hung loose in his arms against the door of the car. He began to moan.

"What the hell is she?" Hog was saying again. His fat body had pressed Scarlett's against the other side of the car.

"She says she's a West Indian. When I met her, she was living down in Spanish Harlem. The priest who married us told me she was Puerto Rican."

"Married you?"

"I suppose she's a little bit of everything. What difference does it make, anyway?"

"I was getting on her," Andrew moaned. "I was getting on her and I saw it. There, around her neck. I told her to take it off and she laughed."

"Holy Mary, Mother of God," the woman shouted.

"Shut up," said Cody.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, Lamb of God, who takes away our sins."

“Make her stop,” said Andrew. “Please make her stop.” He was almost crying. He turned his face to Jason.

Jason felt the cold; he began to shiver. All five figures stood motionless beneath black sky—there were no stars. The wind rose and rustled the trees and the new spring growth, caught the dust in the parking lot and blew it swirling round them waist high. He looked into Andrews eyes, which were wide and deep and filled with something he had never seen before, something which made him shiver more than the wind.

“Go away,” muttered Andrew. There were tears in his words. “Go away, all of you. Please. Go away and let me kill her.”

Jason lay flat on his back in the bed, stared at the cracked ceiling and watched the smoke from his cigarette rise to it in a straight line, then billow out in wide circles. Five years it’s been since that happened, he thought. Five years. And never in all those years had any of them—Hog, Cody, Andrew, Jason—never had any of them ever mentioned it. Often he thought: maybe it wasn’t Andrew; it was someone else. Or: I did dream it; it never really happened. What happened that night could have nothing to do with Andrew either before or after the event. Almost immediately, in fact, Andrew had become himself again. Cody told Scarlett and the woman to leave; but while she was dressing Hog had said, “There’s still the ten dollars and if Andrew won’t use it, I will,” and he started for the woman. Cody started laughing, and then Jason. Hog stopped, embarrassed, and looked around him. “What’s so funny?” And then Andrew was laughing. Scarlett grinned and even the woman laughed. Andrew said, “Hog, why is it you try so hard, think about nothing else and never get any?” The woman turned on Andrew and caught her cross in her hand, “Maybe you’d like this as a souvenir?”

and he answered her: "Shut up, you little bitch," and laughed.

One cold December night two years before he had told Gold about it. It was the night of an ice storm and all traffic out of the city was as frozen as the electric wires and water pipes. They sat by the killer stove, the old Jew and himself, smoking cigarettes and talking. After he had related the event to Gold, the man rocked back in his chair, took his watch from his vest pocket, looked at it and put it away again. "It's late."

Jason leaned over close to the stove. "What do you think?"

"I think your friend is a very dangerous man."

"Nonsense. His whole life, except for that one event, has been as ordinary and dull as any."

"That night your friend came as close to having a dark night of the soul as he will ever come. Next time there will be no one there to stop him."

"Surely other men have such lapses and never repeat them?"

"Of course. But they are forced to them by extraordinary circumstances. I saw many such breaks in Germany in the '30's. But to be driven to it by a pimp and a whore and a cheap gold cross, that is something else. I know Andrew Thurman well enough to know that what is wrong with him is what is wrong with most people in this city. He lives too much in the present. You, you are different. You live too much in the past or future—you brood over both too much and therefore you will never be really dangerous to anyone but yourself. But Andrew, he knows nothing of the past and therefore cares nothing about the future. Such men create a false past and an impossible future and are a danger to everyone around them. You be careful of your friend; you have looked into his soul and have seen what is there."

"Funny, but I never think of Andrew as having a soul."

"He does; but he has turned it into a subtle violent thing which bides its time and waits for the right moment. It made one mistake; it will not make that mistake again."

That is what Gold said; Jason's father said something quite different. Of course, he was not talking about that night—Jason never mentioned it to him. It was just after Ann, Andrew's sister, had been sent away; he was standing in the middle of one of his unfinished houses on a crisp autumn day. Around him naked boards rose and crisscrossed like parts of a labyrinth. Jason told him about Ann. He said nothing about it for a moment; his eyes travelled about the half-finished house. "If we don't finish in a month, the weather will get us; and then the bank." He walked through the structure and Jason followed. "How did Andrew take it?" he asked.

"Like everything else," said Jason. "His stock may have gone down a point from the way he acted."

"Don't be too sure; I know the whole notion of heredity is old fashioned now. But don't think there isn't anything in it. I've seen it at work too often."

"There's nothing wrong with Andrew. Or at least, not what is wrong with Ann."

"Don't be too sure; the pressures on a man are great enough to keep him in line, sometimes for good, no matter what sort of unbalance may lie beneath the surface. But sometimes no amount of pressure can suppress things—and our world gets more tolerant of such things every day. You watch him—that's all."

Traditionless, and animal; heredity, like Ann. Or both? He smashed his cigarette into the ashtray on the bed beside him. Surely not like Ann, he thought and then cursed himself. He had made a vow not to think about Ann and now she

was in his mind again. He looked at the clock. It said nine—time to get up. He swung his feet from the bed to the floor and experienced a short spell of dizziness. He was tired and damp with sweat and the noise on the street had turned into a steady racket, of which Francisco's hammering was now only a small part. In spite of himself he let his eyes move about the room, over the clothes, over books lying on the floor beside the bed, to the plates and cups stacked beside the sink waiting to be washed one at a time as they were needed, to the cluttered bookcases filled with books right side up, upside down, lying on their sides, stacked haphazardously on top of one another and piled up in stacks beside the cases. The coffee-pot has to be washed, he thought bitterly. If only I could wash the coffeepot at night my whole day would be changed. He stood up and stretched and walked over to the sink to wash the pot.

THE BROTHERS

THE title is free and clear; there won't be any trouble with it," the man said. He stood by the table at which Jason was sitting. All around them stretched row after row of metal bookshelves filled with carefully dated black ledgers. For a room devoted to books and records, to the careful reading of land deeds, and house titles and birth records, the lighting was very poor—dim and yellow. Jason sat at a long table between two bookshelves and watched the dust rise and settle in the yellow light and wondered why

public records offices and archives never made use of windows. Outside it was three-thirty on a searing July afternoon, the sun so hot that it turned the pavement into a broken, irregular mirror torturing the men and buildings above it. But here, in the Records Library of the Fulton County Courthouse, the time was always twilight on a late September afternoon: dim, shadowless, damp, and musty. Like going from the funeral pyre into the tomb, thought Jason. A tomb where all the carefully preserved attempts at immortality were rotting silently away in the dampness. He remembered the argument Gold and Percey had had some time before. Percey was what Gold called "The Atlanta *Constitution's* reincarnation of Henry Grady." According to others he was a talented, promising young reporter whom the Atlanta papers would have trouble holding. Late one afternoon after an hour or so of drinking in the '98 Club, Percey said to Gold, "The trouble with you is, you believe in the value of religion."

"And why is that a trouble?" asked Gold.

"Because religion has no value. It has nothing distinctive to offer people anymore."

"Nothing except understanding," said Gold. "And patience, and love, among other things."

"All of which are offered by any number of strictly human moral and ethical systems. Christianity—along with Judaism of course—is worthless today not because it's old fashioned or behind the times or too difficult. It's worthless because it's wrong. It made a basic mistake about human nature."

"What mistake was that?" asked Jason.

"That suffering improves a man. It believed that, it taught it, it insisted on it. Now that doctrine was all right as long as man had to suffer—might as well make the best of a bad thing, which Christianity did. But man improves, gets better

—call it evolution, if you like; Christianity was wrong about that too, you see; we have come to see that man is not inherently evil.”

“In Adam’s fall we sinned all,” said Jason. “Bartender, more drinks.”

“And what has moved you to all this soul searching?” asked Gold.

“Not soul searching,” said Percey. “There you go again, dealing in old worn-out cliches. As I was saying, we now know that suffering is not inevitable, that eventually we will wipe it out.”

“You keep saying ‘we’; what do you mean by ‘we’?” asked Gold.

“Man. The collective consciousness. So religion plods along, insisting on suffering in the face of overwhelming human improvement. It’s sticking its head in the sand, just like the old pagan religions stuck their heads in the sand when Christianity came along.”

“Now whose dealing in old worn-out cliches?” asked Jason.

“You leave out one thing,” said Gold. “Religion offers immortality, something no human system can offer.”

“People don’t believe in immortality any more; or rather, more and more people see it as wishful thinking, as a pipe dream.”

“Do you really believe that?” asked Gold. “Yes. Of course you do. Well, I’ll tell you what. You go down to the Fulton County records office and look at the birth certificates and wills and deeds—at the little feeble human attempts at immortality. You go down and look at them: row after row after row, sitting there and rotting away. You go down there and read them and then come back and tell me that men don’t believe in immortality.”

And now Jason sat in the middle of all these “feeble attempts” and stared up at the thin red-faced man holding out in his hand a large ledger. “Thank you,” said Jason and took the book from him. The man padded silently away.

Jason put the ledger on the table before him and glanced at it, just in case the man had stopped at a dark corner to watch him. That the deed to the house was in order he never doubted; he had come here only to get a little closer to death and he was pleased at how like a tomb the building was. His father had died two months before in Florida and had been buried there. His will had specified particular arrangements for the funeral and had ordered that none of the family be present. “It was all very nice,” the lawyer who attended had told Jason. “The cemetery is beautiful—green and simple and very near the ocean—and your father has an excellent plot.”

Jason had seen him just before he left, but only by accident. He had stopped by the old house to try to find a book he thought was there and had found instead his father sitting in the living room surrounded by boxes and stacked furniture and bare walls. He was sitting in an old easy chair, his straight back hard against the fading fabric, making him look taller than he really was; his gnarled red hands clutching the wooden arms; his face lined and leather colored, his eyes fixed straight ahead, hardly moving to follow Jason into the room.

“What all this?” asked Jason.

“What does it look like? I’m moving.”

“Moving? Where to?”

“Florida.”

“But why? What’s wrong?”

"There's nothing wrong. I'm retiring, that's all. I'm going to one of those retirement villages."

"For God's sake, what for? You got the house here."

"What I do is my business."

"Of course it is. But why can't you stay here?"

"I don't want to. That's all."

Jason held his breath. "Is it Mother?" he asked.

"Your Mother's been dead for over a year. What could she have to do with it?"

Jason did not answer him; he stood in the middle of the room, not knowing what to do or say. Finally he asked, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't think you'd care."

"You know that's not true."

"It isn't? This is the first time you've been here in months."

Jason moved a box from a chair and sat down.

"I'm sorry," said his father. "That wasn't right. What you do with your life is your own business. That's something your mother never understood, did she?"

"Not really."

"No, she didn't. She always felt that no matter what you did, no matter how good or how bad, she was responsible for it. I used to tell her, 'Helen, stop worrying. He's grown now.' But she wouldn't stop worrying. Of course, you gave her less trouble than any of the others. I thought that, when all of you but you moved away, things would be better. But they just got worse. Do you have a cigarette?"

Jason gave him one.

"Let me tell you something. You're young, and I assume you won't waste your time with the *Dissenter* forever. When you go into business, don't do anything else in this city. Don't try to help anybody, don't join any committees; stay as far

away from politics as you can possibly get. I'll tell you why. You don't want what the others want; neither did I or my brother. And look what happened to us. So all you can possibly get here, if you work real hard, is the right to be left alone."

"All right. I believe you. But why do you have to go to Florida, of all places? Why can't you..."

"Did I ever tell you what they told me at the bank when they foreclosed on all those houses? You were a child then so you probably don't remember. Forty houses, built, ready to be moved into, and nobody to buy them because the money got tight. And when the interest finally got me Laughlin called me in and said, 'It's tough, Robert. Men like you build this city and men like me get everything.' That's what the bastard told me the day he took the houses. A month was all I needed. A month and I'd be rich today."

"But so what if you're not rich? You have plenty of money. Any more would be wasted."

"But I would've beat 'em. When your great-grandfather came here from Warm Springs he didn't have anything but the shirt on his back. He painted signs for a living. And after three generations we almost beat them. And I would've if I'd stayed out of politics. Politics! Your uncle talked me into all that nonsense. You never knew what a talker your uncle was. Goddam it, he could have talked me out of everything I had, if he'd wanted to. I wish he had—if he'd talked me out of everything—left me with nothing but the shirt on my back and all his crazy slogans and campaigns, then maybe I could've beat 'em that way. But he always left me just enough to build on so he could come back a few years later and start all over. Do you have a light?" He was holding the

dead black end of his cigarette before his eyes. Jason lit it once again.

“I’ve never known anybody to hate a man the way he hated Hardy. Anything Hardy was for he was against; if Hardy had been morally capable of standing up for Jesus Christ I think Orph would have gotten the devil himself to run for mayor. He said he hated change, the whole idea of going backward or forward. When we were children living on Alexander Street, one morning he got up and walked over to the 10th Street drug store and got a map of Atlanta and brought it home and spread it out on the floor of our bedroom. It was winter and cold as hell and we only had heat in the living room; he kneeled over the lamp shivering, his hands blue, and drew a dark black circle around the center of town—from 10th Street through the train station by Rich’s and behind the Capitol and back to 10th Street—and he looked up at me—I was still in bed under the covers—and said, ‘If I could I’d build a wall right where this line is—a great big wall. Then I’d be king and I wouldn’t allow anyone to build anything or tear down anything inside that wall.’ ”

“ ‘What about outside the wall?’ I asked.”

“ ‘Outside there’d be nothing but farms. I’d have an army and anytime anybody outside the wall tried to do anything but farm I’d lead my army in a war against him.’ ”

“He couldn’t have been more than ten years old when he did that. When we had the big fire a few years later he said it was bad because it burned down old parts of the city. ‘If it had happened a few miles in one direction or another it would have been a good thing,’ he said. And a few years later—God, the things I remember now—he approved of the Leo Frank lynching. ‘The jury did what the whole town wanted them to do,’ he said. ‘They found him guilty. And nobody, not even

the Governor, had the right to say *no*. I don't care if he was a Jew or a Negro or a Tasmanian—if the town said he was guilty, he was guilty. They should've lynched him.' He even got me to go with him on the march to Slaton's mansion. What a mob—everybody shouting and singing and marching. The buses only ran to Peachtree Creek and we had to walk in the mud on out to Buckhead. Can you imagine? Nothing but a dirt road out to Buckhead then. Did you know that they had to take the word of a Negro to convict him. Anytime a jury takes the word of a Negro over the word of a white man, you can bet it had good reason to. That's what Orph said till the day he died. Till the day he died." He looked at the cigarette again. "Damn it, they can't even make cigarettes the way they used to," and he tossed it into the fireplace.

"He said he hated change, but he really hated Hardy finally. That's what politics does to you. It takes principles away from you and leaves you with nothing but loud-mouth idiots. That's what Hardy is you know—a great big mouth. And people like Thurman and Laughlin put a little money and a few whispers into the throat and out of that big mouth comes what they want said in the way Hardy knows how to say it. I told Orph that—even when I didn't need to because he knew it. He'd beat Hardy at every turn, show him up for a fool on every point. Even as late as the early fifties when Orph had given up on everyone else and was running against Hardy himself, he was making a fool of him. 'Look what Hardy's done to you,' he'd shout to those pitiful little crowds who came to hear him. 'Twenty years ago he got into office by saying he was going to do things for the citizens of Atlanta. But who has he done anything for? A handful of men who pay him are better off now. And who else? You, me? The people who were born and raised here? No. Outsiders. People

from the North, the South, the Far West. From all over the world. Atlanta is twice the size it was twenty years ago, but so what? Have those people he got into office by promising to help been helped any? No.' And of course he was right, but so what? While Orph talked, Hardy's machine kept grinding away. The rich and the near rich on the northwest side of town and the Negroes—over a third of the city was Negro even then—he had both groups in his hip pocket. He promised the rich he'd keep things going just the way they were going and he promised the Negroes he'd change everything and the votes just kept rolling in. It got to the point where he didn't have to worry about Atlantans anymore because real Atlantans—like you and me—got to be just a minority, not counting the Negroes, of course, which Orph never counted and Hardy did nothing but count. I told Orph, 'You're like a man who breaks his radio because he doesn't like what he hears on it. You keep breaking Hardy, you keep proving he's a fool, but so what?' But Orph knew that, of course. He just couldn't stop trying to build that goddam wall."

"Your mother tried to stop me of course. 'You keep throwing your money away,' she said. 'Stop listening to Orph. What do you care about all those other people? They don't mean anything to you. Think about your family.' And she was right—about stopping I mean. But her reasons were all wrong. She could never forget we were poor once—but being a woman you can't blame her for that. She just wanted to be sure we'd never be poor again. College, doctor bills, clothes—she kept dinning them in my ears. When we were down she'd just get real quiet and suffer and when we were up, making money hand over fist, then disaster was always just around the corner. She never understood. When I was travelling even, way back then, she didn't understand that it wasn't

women or drink that kept me travelling but just the idea of never being anywhere. Security was the family for her but for me never being anywhere, always being on the way somewhere, was security. But how do you tell anybody—and especially a woman—something like that? ‘You don’t love us,’ she would say and how could I tell her it was just because I loved you all so much that I travelled so much. Not to make the money—that’s what I had to tell her—but because by never being anywhere all the rest of you were never anywhere either. You were like people in Birmingham or Natchez or Raleigh—only in a certain place at a certain time. Why didn’t I just tell her? That’s what you want to know? I don’t know if you’re old enough to understand; I don’t know if I’m old enough to understand. Because I didn’t know myself, that’s the reason. I just felt things. God how I felt them. The first time I ever left Atlanta was when I was only eleven or so—in 1916—your grandfather took Orph, who was about fifteen, and me down to Miami to paint. We stayed a year. The trip down took two or three days then, in a Model A, and it must have been dirt roads over half the way. After the first day we stopped by the road somewhere in South Georgia for the night. Back then you drove till you saw a big bonfire a lot of other travellers had built and you pulled up by the road and cooked what you had to eat and slept on the ground or in the car. After supper, when it was getting dark, all the men talked and drank. Everybody was going to Florida to make money in the boom—old men, young men, and a lot of children like myself. Most of ’em were from Atlanta or Macon or Columbus and now I know most of them weren’t going *to* anything, they were running away *from* something—wives or jobs or just being almost poor all the time. And I sat there while it was getting dark and

the fire was getting brighter and brighter and all around as far as you could see was nothing but flat, scraggly, dead farmland. And I felt it then for the first time—I mean, felt what it is not to be anywhere and how that made everything else—for me Atlanta was everything else—how that made everything else not anywhere either. You see? I don't even know now what I mean. But I know what I felt and by God I still feel it. I've never stopped feeling it, even when your mother got me back here. The next night we stopped again about half way down to Florida. There never was anything so desolate as the middle of Florida then. Even now, between cities you can see what it was like all over. And that night an old hellfire preacher wandered into camp and cussed the men out for drinking and preached to us children about hell and sin and the men didn't try to stop him probably because they had all been raised to respect him and what he was saying. Now there's nobody in the world believes in hell or sin more than me—I've seen too much of both not to believe. But that old dirty longhaired probably half drunk preacher made me see something—that when you're nowhere, when you're between two nowheres, hell and sin don't mean anything. And the next day, when we got to Miami, I saw the ocean for the first time, and I felt then like I do now, that on the sea is the best place of all to be—out there even what's beneath you, holding you up, isn't solid."

He stopped, leaned forward in his chair, rested his elbows on his knees and stared at the bare floor. "I'm sorry," he muttered. "I didn't mean to go on like that."

Of course you didn't mean to, thought Jason. You've talked more about yourself in twenty minutes than you did in twenty years. "Then it's Orph," said Jason.

"Not Orph, not your mother, not your brothers and sister,

not you. When I came back here to live, when your mother finally got me off the road, I ended any hope of there ever being anything between me and the people I love. I came back here and started dying, but by God, I'm not going to die here or be buried here. At least I'll have that much." He paused. "Let me tell you this: you've got to either commit yourself to one thing or to nothing at all. Some men have to do one, some the other."

In the archives building the light grew dimmer as the afternoon waned and the sun moved steadily to the west side of the building. Jason sat at the table, staring at the ledger. Father tried to burn the world, to turn it into a state of constant transformation, he thought. And Orph tried to freeze it, to turn it into an ice palace. Each man ends the world in his own way: some burn it, some freeze it, and a few blasphemers drown it. That's what Gold said when I told him about the visit with my father.

It was at the '98 that he said it. He listened while Jason recounted his father's words; and when he finished, the old man said, "I knew your uncle Orpheus—God, what names, Jason, Orpheus. Where did you get them?"

"They go all the way back to when the family was still in England. At least that's what the family Bible says."

"Till just before the Argo sailed, I suppose. Well, either some ancestor was a scholar or he had a good sense of humor."

"What about Orph?"

"What about him? Just what your father said. He made sense, he was right about most things, but so what? When logic failed—as it always fails on the battlefield—he went to rhetoric. Your father and Orpheus: Odysseus and Aeneas. Don't you see the parallel? No, of course you don't. Odysseus

never really got home and Aeneas never really left home. Your father is a Greek—he looks life squarely in the face and doesn't turn his face from what he finds. Your uncle was a Roman—he gave up logic because you can't argue men to a moral position. But your father was wrong about Orpheus really hating Hardy more than he hated change. In his shift from logic to rhetoric he merely personified change in an appropriate form—Hardy.

“But why did Dad come back? Why did he try to do what he knew he couldn't do?”

“Honor, I'm afraid, the undoing of most heroes.”

“Don't talk nonsense. You just said he was a realist.”

“Ah, this younger generation. How is it that realism cancels out honor? Actually, it's usually just the opposite.”

“Honor, heroes. Dad built houses and stores and Orph bought and sold cotton and got so mixed up in politics that he ruined himself and almost ruined my father. Almost hell, he did ruin him. And I don't see much honorable or heroic about it all.”

“You have to take what the world gives you,” said Gold. “The world gave the Greeks Troy—a sordid little war over adultery. The world gave your uncle and father a boom town—a town whose only reason for existence from the very beginning was its ability to take advantage of one misfortune after another. Take the fire your uncle said burned the old part of town; what it burned was acres of wooden claptraps thrown up overnight during one of the booms and left for poor rats and people who came and went and died without anybody even knowing about them, much less caring. Black and white, they just made the best of what they were given. Your uncle was wrong; it *was* good that they burned. But then maybe he wasn't wrong: heroes' words are seldom true

outside the battlefields where they're spoken. For Orpheus, there had to be something old and changeless for him to defend, and what's older or more changeless than poverty or misfortune?"

"Heroes again?"

"Yes, heroes. The world gave Orpheus and your father Atlanta, and they just had to make the best of it. And they did, each in his own way."

"You talk about my father as if he were dead."

"Well, isn't he?"

And he was, thought Jason in the dark room. Even then he was dead. He said it himself—he started dying the day he came back to Atlanta to us, his family. But he did beat them in a way. They didn't get his body—they got his spirit, his soul, and crushed it but they didn't get his body; and what this city wanted—the only thing it could possibly understand—was the body. And he took that away from them. Did he know that, I wonder, or did he just feel it, too? No matter. Whatever he thought his body is rotting away in Florida now, near the sea the lawyer said. Sitting there in the middle of all that desolation he talked about, on a hill maybe (did the lawyer say that?) overlooking the sea, the place to be because there even what's beneath your feet isn't solid.

"Don't you need some light, sir?" The man standing next to Jason again, his red face looking down through the dim swirling dust.

"No, I'm through. Thank you."

WORDS FROM THE CENOZOIC

BY MARY NEAL NORTHCUT

I do not understand about the eras.
The dearth of Pre-Cambrian fossils is explicable:
Soft-bodied organisms sank into the slime,
Too intangible to petrify. Backbone, chain-links
Of calcium, provides explicit demarcation.
Excellent, adventuresome creatures crawled
Up the beach of time, the sea pulled back,
Amphibians and reptiles fed and spawned.
Huge alien monsters with their pea-sized brains
Deposited their bones while early mammals relished
Their posterity of eggs; the climate changed,
And primates specialized themselves
For murder, agriculture, territorial disputes.
Glaciation came and went in solid tides. . . .
Two billion years dissolve, distort; the mirror
Held to nature offers up these fragments
In a ritual of derision as science lights
A candle to itself; the dog and ape consort.

But the beautiful, naked gods of Greece
Were amorous, unlearned, omnipotent;
And Heraclitus knew the flux was temporal,
The logos ethical but uninvolved.

There are no faces worth recalling
In all those ante-rooms of time.
Man is the miracle my blood demands.
Why should I be amazed about the eras?

Incredible, that Socrates refused
The mouth that Alcibiades inclined.

THE HISTORIAN AND HIS POLITICS: TAINE, AULARD, AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY FRANCIS BULLITT LOWRY

THE MYTH persists that history is a branch of science—a social science—and that immense labor and brilliance will eventually produce factually exact statements of what once was. It is impossible to predict the intellectual triumphs that will come to our descendants, but judging by the past and present of the historical discipline, the hope that factually exact statements will appear in the future is a vain one. Historians, like all men, even the most thoughtful ones, see events through their own prejudices and preconceptions. That is true of every historian and his history, and because the French Revolution ideologically can be all things to all men, its study demonstrates the subjective quality of historical writing better than the writing on most events.

To Frenchmen, and French historians, the Revolution is not only an historical event and a national shrine; it is a topic of continuing importance in daily politics. Radicals, liberals, socialists, nationalists—all find their source and inspiration in certain of its events, albeit different events, while stress on the Revolution's chaos and destruction unites conservatives. Such diverse historians as Thiers, Lamartine, Michelet, de Tocqueville, Taine, Aulard, and Mathiez have all studied the Revolution, and their differences of emphasis and interpre-

tation may be traced to their political beliefs. To be sure, when a group of historians whose writings span more than a century is considered, other influences are present. Owing to the work of archivists more raw data was available in 1900 than in 1850. Developments in research methods have allowed twentieth century historians to be more subtle and more analytical than their predecessors. But it is political bias which explains much of the differences in interpretation shown by the historians who have labored over explanations of the French Revolution.¹ The influence of political bias on historical studies is made clear by the work of two historians, Hippolyte Taine and Alphonse Aulard, whose careers together spanned almost the entire turbulent history of the Third Republic. Aulard, the younger of the two, died eleven years before the outbreak of World War II; and Taine, the elder, turned to historical studies immediately after France's ignominious defeat in 1871.

Born in 1828, Hippolyte Taine began his studies at the *École Normale Supérieure* at the time of the Revolution of 1848. He studied philosophy, but was apparently too outspoken for the examiners, themselves by 1851 under considerable pressure from the government; and he did not pass his examinations. Taine taught and wrote for several years while he prepared for another examination for his degree, this time in literature. Finally, after some difficulty, his essay on Livy was accepted. His bad health and by then unreliable political reputation combined to push him into a career of writing. Only in 1864 did he take the post of examiner at St. Cyr and two years later the post of lecturer at the *École*

¹ It is possible that political biases and historical judgments may both stem from deeper psychological sources, but it seems unnecessary to explore that possibility: the effect is the same in any case.

des Beaux Arts. Books on philosophy, psychology, and literature had given him a secure reputation as a writer by the time he turned to history immediately after the defeat of 1871, and he was elected to the French Academy in 1878. His health, always poor, finally broke down completely, and he died in 1893.

Alphonse Aulard was born in 1849, almost a generation after Taine's birth, and he, like Taine, attended the École Normale Supérieure. In 1877 he took his doctorate in literature with a thesis on Asinius Pollio. Aulard lectured on French history and rhetoric for several years, and in 1884 he published a work on the orators of the Revolution. Thus in 1885 when the municipality of Paris endowed a chair at the Sorbonne for the history of the French Revolution, Aulard was chosen to occupy it. For almost twenty years after his appointment, Aulard busied himself with the compilation and publication of long series of documents, and it was not until the turn of the century that he published the majority of his studies on the Revolution. He also edited a journal, *La Revolution Française*, and contributed often to other periodicals, among them *La Justice*, edited by his close friend the radical politician Georges Clemenceau. Aulard stayed at the Sorbonne until his retirement in 1922, six years before his death.

It was the Franco-Prussian War and the frightening insurrection of the Paris Commune that had moved Hippolyte Taine to turn to history from the literary and philosophical subjects in which he had already won acclaim. Before the ink was dry on the peace treaty with Germany, Taine, acting from patriotism and a sense of *noblesse oblige*, was studying historical documents. As he wrote shortly after France's defeat, ". . . The enlightened and rich classes should lead the

ignorant and those who live only from day to day.”² The problem Taine was trying to solve was simple to pose: since 1789 France had been troubled; since 1789 the French, he believed, had “acted and thought partly like madmen, partly like children.”³ Until his death Taine would try to find the cause of those disorders.

Some of Taine’s thoughts on the philosophy of history affected his search. Years before the Franco-Prussian War, he had come to believe, predictably for a man writing in the mid-nineteenth century, that he should use the methods of science to analyze historical events.⁴ But in practice he stressed imagination, “the eyes of the brain,” to penetrate beneath the surface characteristics of either men or civilizations in order to discover the unity he believed must exist there.⁵ For purposes of analysis he believed that civilizations had three sets of characteristics, which he called “race, environment, and moment.” By “race” he meant all those attributes that sprang from the state of being a man. “Environment” he used to include all the external factors within which a civilization operated: nature, climate, topography, and politics, the last being an unfortunate suggestion derived from earlier theorists like Sismondi. “Moment” was cumulative historical action, including the spirit of an age. These three

² Letter: Taine to John Durand, Paris, 29 novembre 1871, Hippolyte Taine, *H. Taine, sa vie et sa correspondance* (4 vols.; Paris, 1902–07), III, 173; Albert Mathiez, “Taine, historien,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, VIII (1906–07), 257.

³ Letter: Taine to Guizot, Paris, 19 decembre 1871, Taine, *Vie et correspondance*, III, 175.

⁴ Andre Chevrillon, “Préface,” *Le Centenaire de Taine, 1828–1928* (Charleville, [1928]), p. 10; see also James Westfall Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing* (2 vols.; New York, [1942]), II, 447–450.

⁵ Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (4th ed., 5 vols.; Paris, 1877), I, iv, x.

factors operated through mutually dependent institutions—philosophy, religion, the family, the state, the arts—to form one organic structure: civilization.⁶

France's problem and the solution of that problem, Taine concluded after 1871, were both part of the "environment" of politics, and politics was history. The whole history of a nation shapes the successful political system that ideology could never invent. Political experimentation was idiocy. A successful system, he thought in echo of Edmund Burke, was always based on some strong and old structure that men and events may slowly remodel and change, but whose nucleus they must always preserve. Taine's historical researches were therefore purposeful: he asked history to give a program of government. Buried in France's history was France's proper government. According to Taine:

Nature and history have chosen for us beforehand; it is we who must accommodate ourselves to them, because it is certain that they will not accommodate themselves to us. The social and political form in which a people can enter is not free to an arbitrary whim, but determined by its character and its past.⁷

To ask the nation for a preference was useless; "ten million ignorances do not make one knowledge."⁸ The historian must examine history; he must examine the origins of contemporary France.

The decisive event in contemporary France was, of course, the Revolution. "At the end of the last century . . . [France] submitted to a metamorphosis. Its ancient organization dis-

⁶ Ibid., pp. xxxiii, xxxix-xl.

⁷ Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine* (12 vols.; Paris, 1899-1900), I, iv.

⁸ Ibid., p. ii.

solved; [the nation] itself tore its more precious organs and fell into convulsions which seemed mortal.”⁹ From that time all the lines of contemporary history were drawn—and contemporary history had been unhappy for France.

Taine, therefore, was caught in a dilemma. He was searching France’s past to discover her proper form of government, but in France’s past was the Revolution he hated. If he passively accepted the Revolution as the inescapable culmination of France’s history, he would destroy his own mission. Thus, Taine had to prove that the Revolution was neither a revolution nor French.

That it was not a revolution he tried to prove through a claim that the government fell apart rather than was overthrown. Why the collapse of the government should make the revolution less the legitimate culmination of France’s previous history than an overturning would, Taine never explained. Power, he wrote, simply fell to the ground from whence it was picked up by the “violent and overexcited mob.”¹⁰ From July of 1789, “there was no longer any government; the artificial edifice of human society collapsed utterly; one returned to a state of nature. It was not a revolution, but a *dissolution*.”¹¹

That the Revolution was not French he tried to prove through a claim that its dominant threads were an alien imposition on France and not the main threads of French history at all. Once the dissolution had come, he argued, the disorder was exacerbated and maintained by the unrealistic

⁹ Ibid., p. v.

¹⁰ Ibid., III, 3. The title of this section, “The Spontaneous Anarchy,” reinforced his argument.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

thought of Rousseau and the philosophes.¹² If he could attribute the violence and mistakes of the Revolution to the imposition of an arbitrary political theory upon the proper natural form of the nation's government, then Taine would have solved the dilemma. But that approach forced him to lay every mistake, every violence, every madness, at the feet of theorists acting purely on the basis of theory, and that interpretation has little relevance to the events of the Revolution.

Taine began his studies with his conclusions, and his work only confirmed them. The Revolution was not a revolution, and it did not spring from the evolution of French history. Neither conclusion is beyond sharp criticism in the light of modern research, but Taine's compelling style served to cover a multitude of sins. Aulard called Taine a pamphleteer, a charge that, ironically, would be levelled against Aulard himself.¹³ But Aulard's charge overlooked one of Taine's main virtues in his portrait of the Revolution. Taine challenged the oversimple "*le peuple est bon*" which had served in the past and would serve in the future to motivate many French politicians and historians.¹⁴

The democratic ideal that Taine attacked Alphonse Aulard defended. A more academic writer than Taine, Aulard was

¹² Ibid. That was only one cause; the other was famine, but famine was obviously a transient phenomenon.

¹³ For Taine's methods of research see Alphonse Aulard, *Taine, historien de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1907) and the brief critique in G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, [1959]), pp. 227–233; for the pamphleteering charges see Alphonse Aulard, *Polémique et histoire* (Paris, [1904]), p. 43 and Albert Mathiez, "Une lettre de Albert Mathiez [à Louis Gottschalk], *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, IX (mai-juin, 1932), 219.

¹⁴ Such is the judgment advanced by the Dutch historian, Pieter Geyl, "Michelet and the French Revolution," *Debates with Historians* (Boston, 1958), p. 106.

no less a partisan, but in contrast to Taine's conservatism, Aulard was a radical republican. Thus he tended to exalt "the people," to castigate the Roman Catholic Church, and to enthrone democratic ideals. And "democracy in France," Aulard wrote, "dates from 1789."¹⁵ He made no secret of his sympathy for the Revolution. "We could hardly hope to succeed in hiding our preference for the people of whom we are one But why dissimulate . . . ? He who does not sympathize with the Revolution sees only the surface. In order to understand it, one must love it."¹⁶ That is a sophism. Certainly an historian must have a feeling for the events he is describing, but Aulard's sympathy and love were limited to the principles he wanted to find, not to the period as a whole.

The Revolution, Aulard believed, was a continuing process. It "did not begin any more in 1789 or 1787 than it ended in An VIII or 1815," he wrote. Perhaps confusing his history with a catechism, he continued, "All the past prepared for it and announced it, and far from being ended today, it continues in deeds as well as in our spirits."¹⁷ To the Revolution, the most fertile period in French history, France owed its liberties and its hopes.¹⁸ His own declaration of faith underlined this sentiment. Democracy, said Aulard,

is our nation governing itself by reason, that is to say, following its natural laws and its own aesthetic; it is the French people all together coming to equality of political and social rights; it is the suppression of classes; . . . it is equality through fraternity and liberty; it is . . . social soldarity; it is, finally, the realization of the Declara-

¹⁵ Aulard, *Polémique et histoire*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Aulard, *Études et leçons sur la Révolution française* ([1^{re} série]; Paris, 1893), pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

tion of Rights of 1789 which pedants find sentimental and outdated, but which is, at bottom, a scientific program for the French ideal.¹⁹

The tendency to relate the past to the present is one of the more conspicuous features of Aulard's work. Indeed, it was his conscious intention to examine those features of the Revolution which were most influential in his present, even though that concentration might not be upon the lines which were most important in the development of the Revolution itself.²⁰ Aulard examined the Revolution to discover "the origins and development of democracy and the republic"; in fact, that was the revealing subtitle of his synthesis. *The Political History of the French Revolution*. In that work he singled out two of the revolutionary principles, the principle of equality and the principle of national sovereignty. "The logical consequence of equality is democracy. The logical consequence of national sovereignty is the republic."²¹ In 1792, those two consequences were realized in the First Republic.

Aulard therefore glorified the Republic in its years from 1792 to 1795; but in those years appeared the Terror. Aulard, forced to explain the Terror, could not allow it to develop from the principles he worshipped. The Terror must stem from causes other than the principles of 1789. For that reason, he blamed the crisis of national defense for creating the Terror and bringing about the downfall of the Republic. Taine had avoided international affairs in order to discredit the Republic, but Aulard invoked them in order to sustain its honor. Once in being, the Republic was called upon to defend the

¹⁹ Aulard, *Polémique et histoire*, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Aulard, *Histoire politique de la Révolution française, 1789-1804, Origines et développement de la Démocratie et de la République* (Paris, 1901), p. viii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. v.

principles of 1789. But to preserve the Revolution against foreign invasion and civil war, it had to contradict those very principles. By the time the dangers had lessened the Terror had discredited democracy and the Republic.²² Despite these mental gymnastics, Aulard's faith remained unshaken; "the French people . . . were the heroes of the Revolution . . ."²³

Aulard's narrative is open to many criticisms. He leaned too much on official reports which, especially in a revolutionary period, are not accurate records of events.²⁴ But to criticize his interpretation is more difficult. To attack his interpretation is to attack the politics of the radical republicans.

Aulard continuously spoke of the "people" as if such an abstraction really existed. It did not. Instead there were rich peasants and poor ones, Parisians and Bordelais, merchants and workers. Moreover, he singled out for examination two threads, democracy and the Republic, or perhaps equality and national sovereignty, and these threads were not the entire corpus of the Revolution. Indeed, abstractions like those, formed after the event, can seldom be used to organize the welter of the past. His greatest fault, therefore, is his projection of his own times and his own ideas into the past.

Thus both Taine and Aulard discovered what they had set out to find. Their intellectual and political voyages, which had lasted decades, ended at the precise port their maps had indicated, perhaps even at the same dock from which they had embarked. Taine's political aims, which had required him to find the Revolution neither a revolution nor truly

²² For this analysis see Aulard, *Polémique et histoire*, pp. 4,20; cf. his *Études*, p. 14.

²³ Aulard, *Histoire politique*, p. 780.

²⁴ James L. Godfrey, "Alphonse Aulard (1849-1928)," *Some Historians of Modern Europe*, ed. Bernadotte E. Schmitt (Chicago, [1942]), pp. 56-57.

French, had led him to discover that it was a dissolution presided over by theorists perverting the proper evolution of France. Aulard's search for democracy and republicanism had led him to extol 1792 as the culmination of France's history and forced him to use the crisis of defense to explain the Republic's failure.

But neither Aulard nor Taine was a fool. Both worked diligently in the documents, and Aulard, at least, was as well versed in them as any person has ever been in any field.²⁵ To suggest that major criticisms can be levelled against each of them is not to say that the basic approach of either man is indefensible. Certainly each of them, Taine more than Aulard, can be criticized, and objections can be raised against the fabric of each interpretation, but both Taine and Aulard were thoughtful men. Neither of them invented documents or purposefully misquoted statements. They found their different interpretations through emphasis and de-emphasis of events that both discussed. Another French scholar once claimed that "truth is in shadings"; he should have said that in shadings are many different truths.

But that conclusion seems to say that, from an infinite array of data, history can support any number of proper interpretations, that history can never reach final truth, and that history, therefore, is fraudulent. To be sure, there are incompetents and charlatans and plagiarists among the ranks of historians, but competent historians can properly use accurate data to support many contradictory interpretations. To declare that the validity of historical studies is thereby destroyed is to assume that history is a science—or a social science—which it is not. To claim that the truth of one

²⁵ Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing* (2d. ed. rev.; New York, [1963]), p. 250.

interpretation must prove other interpretations false is to declare that Picasso's view of reality proves Rembrandt's false, or Vermeer's disproves Kandinski's. History returns answers only to the questions historians ask of it; it returns nothing voluntarily. And the shape of a valid question inevitably determines the shape of the valid answer.

For both Taine and Aulard that question was a political one, but other questions are possible. There is a relationship between historians and the materials they study in which both present something of their own. It is too strong to say that an historian's history is his autobiography, but it is foolish to say that his history is the total picture of the age he depicts. Perhaps a reader ignorant of the French Revolution could take Taine, Aulard, Lamartine, Mathiez, and a dozen others, read each carefully, and by a process of cross-checking and cancellation arrive at a picture of the Revolution more accurate than the one any single historian gives. But it is likely that the careful reader, like every careful historian, would have his own prejudices and preconceptions coloring his interpretation, and the picture he formed by cross-checking and cancellation would be, perhaps, no less accurate than that of any historian but equally challengeable by someone with other preconceptions.

THREE POEMS

BY EUGENE WILLIAMSON

CONTINUO AND PERCUSSION

Thunder in the huge disgruntled night
And rain beyond all thought, all reason;
Within, a space of ordered light,
High-grained wood, Baroque precision:

Now the stiff performer's hands
Inscribe a thin triumphal word,
Abstractly pluck the narrow strands:
. . . frail tinkling of the harpsichord.

Yet none within the straitened hall
Is deaf to echoes from the storm,
Sounds unplanned, unscored; and all
Uneasily commend the contrapuntal form.

FISHERMEN

I have seen the impatient fishermen
Casting in blue-green lake water
On some failing April afternoon
As if they angled there in fear

Night would come before their wish;
Or else imagined wall-eyed fortune swam
Offshore beneath the darkening hush,
Near-credulous of the steely charm

That wounded the water's flesh.
The hooks returned with weed alone,
Till each one swore there were no fish
And turned from the rush-frequenting moon.

RESERVES

Sometime soldiers on our greensward
Precise beyond their memory of summer noons
Turn past baggages, baited hooks, and beer
To the sabre-burdened approver of rifles,
Earnest in their clipped obeisance now
As if on high commended for
Their neat platoons.

Nothing now impugns their cordoned valors:
Marshalled syllables in a militant word
They brace beneath the irenic trees,
Untroubled yet by the green entendriled snake
Nor seeking among the dogwood flowers
The bound sniper's subtleties.

Soon, caught in the drowned paths
They will curse all sunken greens,
Brood, amid starts, on girls
Whose buttocks never met a stake,
Or lounged at night within the mold.

Dark enviers of the small disabling wound:
Soldiers sleeping soft among the scorpions
Dream of the time before mortars,
Down till rattling day begins.

THE RETURN

BY MARION MONTGOMERY

I can't understand why you want it back after all these years," John said.

We were speeding along the smooth black asphalt road through a residential district I had never seen before. Past a rambling building, stretched like a cat along a low ridge. Two hundred yards down the road a new colonial house commanded a lawn of at least six acres dotted with pine trees, in the shade of which clumps of azaleas were waiting to bloom.

"I say I..."

"Oh," I said, turning to my companion. "I'm sorry. I was just remembering that there weren't many houses along here the last time I saw it. What were you saying?"

"It has been a long time, hasn't it? Must look like somebody came along the road here scattering assorted house seed. Used to, a town grew like it knew what it was doing. Now you take North Highland. All the houses there are kin to each other, just like the people were kin to each other. Not family, but kin to each other just the same. Took fifty years, but the skeleton was there hidden all the time and you didn't find any toes growing where there was supposed to be fingers. It's all different now."

"Who owns Tara back there?" I asked.

"Oh, that." He glanced in the rear-view mirror as we rounded a curve. "That's what I mean. New fellow. You don't know him. He's a contractor. Housing projects, private

homes. He'll put a development on his front lawn in another two years. You watch."

I smiled.

"Oh, he's no competition to me. Fact is, I've sold some of his things. It's just that he has as little understanding of houses as he does people. How much? That's what his mind runs on, like this car runs on gasoline. You notice the toothpick columns on that place? Big, high-ceilinged porch. Windows all out of proportion. I thought when he started it he was going to put in picture windows."

I smiled again. "You think I'm jealous?" he asked. "It's not that. It's just that when a town like this, a hundred fifty years old, suddenly becomes adolescent again it's embarrassing. Uncomfortable to be seen in public with her, you might say. And being seen in public with her is my business. That little modern house way back there, it's six months old. Know who lives in it? Old couple. Built it and live there right by themselves."

"I should never have left," I said. "Maybe we should have stayed partners and kept this other fellow from moving in. I'm sorry."

John didn't realize I was teasing him. "That's all right," he said.

We drove on a few miles in silence, John thinking about the contractor and the uneasy bustle of chaos that had come suddenly upon him and I wondering whether a return to business with him would really be the answer after being so long away from people.

"I was saying I don't understand why you want it back after all these years, especially since the town has changed so. You don't have roots set down in Carolina enough to hold you there. You'd find an apartment convenient. Stay with us

till you find something close in. Why try to keep that old barn by yourself?"

"I don't know," I said. "Why do you still keep that little office in the Palmer Building when you need to move further down town? Why do you keep peddling adolescent real estate?"

"I don't know," he said, and grinned. "I guess maybe it's because I figure the old girl will grow up and work out the kinks one of these days. Pushing two hundred thousand people now. Guess it's because I remember Judy when she was fourteen. Only the town's growing like it was nothing but a big ball of protoplasm—no brain, no bones, no nothing. Judy has plenty of all, even if they were mixed up." He laughed out. "Lord, I thought we never would live through the thirteen to sixteen stretch. What a gal she was." But then he stopped laughing, remembering suddenly. "I'm sorry," he said. "I talk too much."

"No. It's all right," I said. "I'm over it now. The memory is there, but I have come back to put all that behind me. I couldn't just by leaving."

"If you'd rather not talk about it."

"No. I'm quite sure. It's better to talk about it. There's where I made my mistake. The war might have made Kingston grow crazy, but it straightened me out. That and the time in the home. I'm tired of running away from it. You can worry about something that happened fifteen years ago and still not understand it or you can complain about the way Kingston is growing, but it's wrong to try to put it out of mind completely, to ignore it by pretending. When I got out of the Army, I thought I had. Then *bing*. I didn't even know what year it was. Now they say that I'm ready to begin again. Just so long as I face what happened." I turned to him, see-

ing his uneasy expression. But he didn't ask me about the war. "You sure you know what you're doing, taking me back in the firm?"

"You sound like you've been talking to a psychiatrist all right," he said. "I suppose they know what they're doing. I just wish you'd stay with us awhile." I couldn't help being amused by such undisguised concern.

"I ran from it long enough and never got away. That's what they said. Now I'm ready to come home."

"I wrote you why the place happened to be for sale." He looked straight ahead at the smooth black road. "This couple's little girl . . ."

"Yes, but that was clearly an accident," I said. "I'm not uneasy about it."

"Well, the old well grew up and nobody had paid much attention to it for years. Somehow she found it."

I noticed, though I was not concerned in my mind, my hand was closed tightly on my knee. I could see that the knuckles stood out white. I tried to release the fingers but they did not hear me, though in a moment the knuckles became red again and my hands lay quiet.

"They buried her two weeks ago. Now they're back in town. Want to sell out as quick as they can. Young folks. He's not upset as much as she is. She has had a time of it. They had to watch her night and day at first."

"John," I said, "I think you must be working with the sanitarium for a commission, the way you talk. If you keep at this, you'll have me back again."

He didn't think it was amusing to joke about myself that way. He turned in innocence. "No. They just said . . ."

That was the first indication I had had that the doctor had

written John. Which shows a lack of faith on his part, don't you think? I had thought, that I was to . . .

"I'd clear it out," John said. "Seal it off."

"What?"

"The well."

We drove along in silence for another half mile. My throat felt tight. I didn't look at the walls of the houses any more.

"We're almost there," Harry said. "The people's name is Jackson. Are you sure you want to go in?"

"Of course I'm sure," I said.

From the road the house looked just as it always had. It sat on the far side of a little valley, a rough field-stone building with huge windows that ran up two stories in the front. The hill was thick with pines, and honeysuckle vines wound through jujube bushes, tangled and brown. The pines in the little valley and the stand of cedars near the road screened and filtered the outsider's view till all the edges seemed to mingle with the dark hill. Only the windows stood out clearly. A thin wisp of blue smoke climbed from the chimney and scattered in the pines. The whole setting seemed out of a German fairy tale.

We turned up the drive, and memory was so strong that I could almost smell the honeysuckle blooms that would be dripping from delicate tendrils in mid-summer. The little park in the valley, where the crocus popped up in the spring, was as cool and quiet as ever. My eyes came to rest on the brown undergrowth about the well.

"Why didn't they know about the well?" I asked.

"She thought it was bricked over. She said nobody told her. They've taken good care of the place," John added quickly.

We were close enough now that I could see the familiar flecks of quartz and mica in the stones of the house, holding it

up steadily. We passed the boxwoods at the foot of the high front terrace and soon then we were walking up the curved stone steps to the terrace itself with the huge flowerbox where my pinks once grew so profusely. John rang the bell and I stood looking at the house. I felt, I must admit, uneasy, yet forced myself to be at ease. Not unhappy, but with an eager sensation as if I were about to find that quietness that I had been promised.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Jackson. May we come in?"

I turned to the door. A young, inevitably sad-faced woman stood there. Her dark hair hung loose and straight about her head with the clinging straightness wet hair has, and there was a smear of dust on her forehead. She had obviously been packing. Her eyes were dark and swollen.

"If you'd rather we came back later?"

"No. No, come in." She opened the door and led the way through the dark vestibule and into the big front room. "You'll just have to step around things and over them. Everything's in such a mess." She forced a little laugh.

"Mrs. Jackson," John said, "this is Mr. Harrison. He's interested in seeing the house."

I spoke and she nodded, but though I meant to be polite, my eyes were already traveling over the big room. A small fire was going in the great stone fireplace. Unburnt edges of paper and the odds and ends of discarded bric-a-brac littered the hearth. The great mantelpiece, too, was loaded with china and books and the things one has to pack. The spot where my own portrait had hung against the paneled wall showed signs of a picture's having been hung there, but the picture was already down and in one of the numerous packing cases stacked about the vast floor, I supposed.

My eyes travelled up the wall. The whole room was open

to the depth of the two stories. The brass ship's lanterns they had loved so well still hung from the exposed rafters. The enormous windows caught the slanting afternoon sun and sprawled it across the floor and on the far wall. Yards and yards of monkscloth hung on either side of the big windows. Books—some with faded spines—lined the shelves that reached across the whole back wall and up to the balcony. The eyes moved to the stairs that ran up the side of the wall. The stairs led to the balcony, with its walls of book cases too, and the door in the middle opening the way to upstairs bedrooms.

The picture was not there.

"It's something of a mess right now," Mrs. Wilmington was saying to the two men. "We've been so busy since . . . since . . ."

"He's seen the place before," Harry said. "Years ago. He used to live here."

Still looking toward the head of the stairs.

"Is . . . is this what you're looking for?" Mrs. Wilmington said finally. She was standing beside a huge oil portrait propped against the wall near the fireplace. Its back was turned, but she faced it toward him.

"Yes, I guess I was looking for it," the man named Harrison said.

"Did you know her?"

"Yes."

Harry, uneasy as suspected, was turning his hat around and around in his hand. But Mrs. Jackson, at Harrison's answer, walked quickly to a big stuffed chair, moved a stack of *Life* magazines and a sea-shell ash tray and sat down. She fumbled at a cigarette. Too late Harry or Mr. Harrison made motions to light it for her. She puffed once, quickly.

"We had to take it down because of Jammey. Jammey got to talking to it. She was just past two when she" She stopped and puffed at her cigarette again. ". . . when she got to talking to it."

"I'm sorry," Harrison said. He noticed that, if she had closed her eyes she would have squeezed out the tears that filled them. Instead she looked up at him. Her lower lip trembled.

"She used to climb up the stairs there. We couldn't keep her from it." She stared at him as if she thought he should say something to relieve her of her guilt. "That's when we took it down. We thought she'd fall."

"Children sure are fascinated by things like that sometimes," said Harry in his simple manner. "I remember when my girl Judy"

"It seemed like we just couldn't keep her away from the stairs. After we took it down, I'd find her in here sometimes. 'Going to talk to the lady. Going to talk to the pretty lady.' I could be in the back of the house and hear her laughing and talking to her."

Mrs. Wilmington wasn't looking at him any more. She was staring the blank stare people have when they become mediums for the past, talking aloud as if she were talking to herself or to some picture he could not see.

Mr. Harrison wanted to sit down. He had the feeling that he looked too spectre-like, standing there in the middle of the boxes and crates. But Mrs. Wilmington didn't seem to notice. He moved some things from the sofa and sat down.

She looked at him, where he had moved. "We finally blocked the stairs. We thought she would forget. When it got warm enough, we'd let her play in the yard. But she didn't

forget. She talked to the lady right on." Mrs. Wilmington swallowed hard. "We knew that kids . . ."

"If you'd rather not . . ." Mr. Harrison found himself repeating his friend's words, and as awkwardly. "We can come back."

"No," she said. "No. Jim thinks I'm foolish but . . . but . . ." The tears came down her cheeks. "But she kept on talking to the lady. We'd let her play in the yard, but then she would get into the park. I couldn't watch her all the time, could I? Well, could I?" she demanded to Mr. Harrison.

He wanted to say sharply: "You were her mother." But he had said that. Her clipped sentences sounded as if she had thought them all before and had practiced them over and over to learn their meaning.

"I thought I had the door locked. . . . She was . . . I couldn't find her . . . in the house, up at the road, in the park . . . and then I called Jim and he . . . he . . ." She collapsed her head on the chair arm a moment, the black hair sagging pitifully. Then she rose and started uncertainly toward the door at the back of the room. Mr. Harrison stood up quickly and turned to see a young man enter the room, put his arm around her more firmly than gently and guide her toward what he remembered to be a bedroom. It closed behind them and he heard the man's firm voice and her low sobs for awhile.

"Mr. Wilmington," Harry whispered at his elbow. Mr. Harrison had forgotten his friend was in the room. Presently Mr. Wilmington returned. There were crow's-feet at the corners of his eyes and he looked older up close.

"I'm sorry gentlemen. My wife is still very much upset, you may understand. I tried to get her to stay with her folks while I did this, but she insisted."

"Mr. Wilmington, this is Mr. Harrison. He's interested in seeing the house."

Mr. Jackson nodded and stretched out his hand. "I'm anxious to sell and take my wife to Florida. This has been very difficult for her. She still can't talk about it without going to pieces. I'm . . . I'm a little worried, frankly."

"She was talking about Mr. Harrison's portrait," Harry said.

"Oh! Did you know her?" he said, turning to Mr. Harrison.

"Yes. Yes, she was my wife." He glared at Harry for putting him in such an awkward position as if he were involved, but Mr. Jackson seemed not upset.

"She'll be relieved to know about the picture," Mr. Wilmington said. "She has some foolish notion that. . . . Once we can get to Florida for awhile everything will be all right." He was not so perfectly in control, Mr. Harrison thought, as he would like to appear to be. "Now if you'll excuse me gentlemen. I must attend my wife. If . . . if you could come tomorrow."

"Only don't blame her," Mr. Harrison said.

"What?" Mr. Jackson said, as if not aware of what was meant.

"I know how it can be," Mr. Harrison said, hoping it would not be necessary to go into detail.

Mr. Wilmington followed them silently. At the door he thrust something into Mr. Harrison's hand. "You will want this," he said. "I found it when I found Jammey. My wife doesn't know, so please don't mention it tomorrow." The door closed behind them. Mr. Harrison didn't look at the object but thrust it into his pocket. Then he and Harry stood for a moment on the terrace.

He remembered this morning when he stood leaning over

the balcony, his wife below him with the still form of Jinney in her arms, screaming incoherently. The wild dash to the stairs, the portrait staring at him from the wall. Down the stairs, past the loosed guard where the child had tumbled over.

"If you stay," Harry said, "you'll need to clean that out and close it."

"What?" he said.

"You'll have to clean that up." Harry was nodding toward the clump of growth that Mr. Harrison had seen as they came up the drive. The well.

The call at the office. The wild ride home. The people crowded around the well. The still, dead woman in her wedding clothes. My wife.

"I'm sorry," I said to Harry, "I wasn't listening I guess. The well? No. I won't close it. I'll build a wall, see. Then I'll train ivy on it. That would be pretty. And plant crocus in the valley there so they will come up in the spring and be seen from the road."

Past the dale where the crocus would spring in March next year, past the pines. There was an opening in the cedars that allowed a glimpse of the road and beyond. I saw, or thought I saw, the white of the contractor's house with its match-stick columns. We went down the steps to get in the sedan, and I picked a pink from the flower box at the steps for my coat. I noticed the wisteria vines around the oak by the mail box, the blue clusters of flowers.

"The honeysuckles smell sweet late in the afternoon like this, don't they?" I said.

"What?" Harry said.

We got in the car.

"Better go meet your neighbor, the contractor. There's

time before Judy expects us for supper. If you want to."

I pulled the object Mr. Jackson had given me from my pocket and cupped it in my hand, away from Harry. It was the wedding broach I had given my wife Wilma, the broach she wore for the portrait. I tried quickly to throw it out the window before Harry could see it, but it struck the door edge and fell back across me near Harry's foot. He picked it up without looking at it.

"Better be careful with these," he said. "They are to your house, you know."

I smiled at his kindness. Slowly, while he was not watching, while he was still thinking they were the keys to the house, I raised my hand to the window and dropped the broach out the window onto the black winding road.

"Yes," I said goodnaturedly, "let's meet him."

"He's going to be mayor too, it looks like," Harry said. "Election in March. You still game?"

"Oh yes. Yes," I said. "Let's meet him."

"Yes sir," Harry said. "Election two weeks off, and he is bound to be elected."

LOST DOCTRINE

BY ARTHUR M. SAMPLEY

The sermon that Saint Francis preached the birds
Was clearer than most sermons preached by men.
He talked a language wrought of pitch and tone
In which each sound had something of the warble
That goes with rustling leaves and new-made nests.
The sermon that he preached was partly true
Of all men and all birds: they tell each other
That love is something like an outstretched hand
Or a dipping wing: it's close, but never there.
When doves and sparrows heard him, they believed.
There still are echoes of it in the trees,
And robins chatter of it on the lawn
As a lost doctrine heard through centuries,
And I beside the bird bath catch the echo
Descending with a flicker through the elm
Or rising coloratura through the oak.

SILLAS, CABRESTOS Y FIERROS: SOME NOTES ON SPANISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT OF THE WESTERN CATTLE INDUSTRY

BY SANDRA L. MYRES

THE GREAT range cattle industry of the American West has long been a source of interest to those who have studied the rise of New World civilization and institutions. Although viewed as an Anglo-American institution, the nineteenth century cattle kingdom in the United States was not English but Spanish in background. Long before the first Texas Longhorn moved northward along the trail to Abilene, and fame and fortune, Spanish frontiersmen had already evolved the techniques and equipment necessary to exploit the vast grasslands of North America.

Although livestock flourished in the French and English colonies, these people were, in general, livestock raisers, keeping a few animals for domestic use as an adjunct to agriculture. The Spaniards were ranchers, breeding great numbers of cattle and horses for the purpose of large scale profitable production. The methods used by the Spaniards were well adapted to the conditions encountered on the North American plains where the Spanish ranchers left a rich legacy in equipment and techniques for working cattle, in legal codes and livestock regulations, and in vocabulary

and folklore which provided the institutional backgrounds of the range cattle industry.

In the trans-Mississippi West, the vast stretches of prairie and great herds of half-wild stock required methods of handling cattle from horseback rather than on foot. One of the most significant Spanish contributions to cattle ranching was the introduction of equestrian equipment and a riding style particularly suited to the needs of the livestock industry. Long recognized as Europe's finest horsemen, the Spaniards borrowed both their riding gear and methods of riding from the Moors (who invaded the Iberian Peninsula during the eighth century) and adapted them to the needs of stock-raising.

The western stock saddle of today is basically the Spanish *silla de campo* (work saddle), adopted from an earlier saddle of Persian design which had a low cantle (*fuste trasero*) and a high front bow (*fuste delantero*) with a long neck or pommel (*poma* or *cabeza*). The basic saddle consisted of a wooden tree (*fuste*) covered with two pieces of leather, the first and longer piece called a *coraza* and a second shorter piece called a *mochila* with slits in the leather for pommel and cantle. In brush country riders usually added a leather covering called a *barda* or *anquera* to protect the horses' flanks from brush and cactus spines.

The Spanish *vaqueros* (cowboys) rode *a la jineta*, a skill also learned from the Moors. The rider sat well up on the horse's withers, feet resting in short stirrups with the knees slightly flexed. This position gave the rider considerable flexibility and maneuverability. For range work the seat was modified slightly, the cantle redesigned, and the stirrups lengthened a little to provide a more comfortable position for the rider during long hours in the saddle.

The Spanish stirrups (*estribos*) were larger and bulkier than modern western models both because of the Spanish custom of riding a la jineta and because of the need to have a firm foothold while chasing cattle across open country. The flat, iron, box stirrup of the conquistadors gave way during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to large wooden block stirrups (*estribos de baul*) and elaborate iron stirrups made in the form of a cross (*estribos de cruz*). Later Spanish and Anglo ranchers added *tapaderos* or "taps" to the stirrup assembly. Tapaderos, pieces of leather covering the stirrups on all but one side, served as protective devices in brush country and colder climates and also prevented the half-wild cow ponies from biting the rider's foot.

The Anglo cattleman quickly adopted the Spanish saddle and method of riding, and he also adapted a number of other Spanish techniques and pieces of equipment. In addition to copying the Spanish saddle and claiming it as his own, the Anglo cowboy employed the lariat (*la reata*), a braided rope used to catch and tie cattle and other livestock. During the sixteenth century the Spaniards fashioned the reata into a loop and attached it to the end of a short lance or stick. Later they discarded the lance and simply tied a noose in the end of a long rope forming the *lazo* (lasso). At first the vaqueros tied the long end of the lazo to the horse's tail, but it quickly became apparent that for roping the large wild cattle of the American plains the tail rope was both awkward and dangerous. The lazo was therefore transferred to the saddle pommel which was shortened and strengthened to bear the brunt of roping. After throwing his loop the rider took a turn (*da le vuelta*) of rope around the pommel, securing the animal and allowing the saddle to absorb the weight and pull of the captured bull or cow. Although some Anglo cowmen used the

Spanish *de le vuelta* (corrupted in English to “dally”), many a novice roper, lacking necessary speed and dexterity, caught his hand between the rope and saddle horn, a mistake that usually resulted in a severed thumb. Most Anglo cowboys preferred to “tie-fast” (*amarrar a muerte*—tie to the death), securing their lasso to the saddle horn with a knot or “tie.”

Essential to working large numbers of cattle were the roundup and the drive, phenomena which the historian of the American plains, Walter Prescott Webb, termed “the twin spectacles of the range.” The roundup, Webb noted, “was in the true sense of the word the product of the open, fenceless, range where men could not keep their cattle separated. The roundup was to cattle what the harvest is to wheat—a gathering of the products of the Plains grass.”¹ Equally important was the drive, the means for getting the product to market. Long before the first Texas cowboys ever tossed a rope over a Longhorn steer, the Spanish cattlemen (*ganaderos*) perfected the techniques of both roundup and drive.

Spanish ranchers frequently held horse roundups in order to resupply their working stock (*remuda*) and to provide remounts for frontier garrisons. On these occasions the men first constructed a wooden enclosure or corral carefully concealed by brush or trees. The riders then divided into three groups—*puestos*, *aventadores*, and *encerradores*. The *aventadores* drove the wild stock toward toward the pen while the mounted *puestos* kept the horses directed toward the opening to the corral. Once the animals were inside the enclosure, the *encerradores* closed the entrance, trapping the herd.

Cattle roundups or rodeos facilitated the sorting of herds

¹ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (New York, 1931), p. 255.

which had become mixed on the common pastures and also served to bring in young stock for counting and branding. As early as the sixteenth century the ganaderos began holding semi-annual roundups of stock utilizing techniques still familiar today. Mounted on horseback, the cowboys fanned out in a circle and drove the cattle toward a central point where they were sorted according to their brands. Unbranded stock (*orejanos*) were divided among the stockmen who owned pasture or grazing rights in the district while strays (*mostrencos*) bearing unfamiliar brands were handed over to the king's representatives.

In a country where cattle were rarely kept in fenced enclosures, herds easily became intermingled and ownership confused. The Spaniards therefore used brands (*fierros* or *marcas*) and ear crops (*señales*) as a simple and effective means for identifying livestock. Although branding was an ancient practice the Spaniards first introduced it to the New World and evolved an elaborate set of laws and customs to regulate the use of brands. In Mexico the first regulations date from 1537 and included requirements that each stockman have a distinct brand so that his animals could be easily identified. No two stockmen could have the same brand, and the use of ear crops without brands was forbidden. Later each stockowner registered two brands, the first a range brand (*el fierro para herrar los ganados*) used to identify livestock and the second a sale brand (*el fierro para vender los ganados*) similar to the Anglo trail brands and used only when stock was being moved from range to market or during transfer of ownership.

The Spaniards (and later the Anglos) usually applied sale brands with pitch or some other temporary substance, but range brands, then as now, were made with a red-hot iron

(*hierro*) applied to the animals' rump or side. Some of the Spanish brands were so elaborate that the Anglos called them "dog irons" or "quién sabes." The term dog iron referred to the similarity between some Spanish brands and fireplace andirons or "fire dogs." "Quien sabe," literally "who knows," identified any brand to which the Anglo cowman could attach no descriptive name (such as "3D" or "Spur").

The Spanish kings gave responsibility for the enforcement of livestock laws to a quasi-governmental organization, the *Mesta*. This group, like the later stockmen's associations of the trans-Mississippi West, received authority to settle problems pertaining to all pastoral industries and to adjudicate disputes over stock ownership and unauthorized sale of strays. Mesta officials, the *alcaldes de Mesta*, kept brand registers (*libros de marcas*), supervised roundups and drives, and enforced all livestock and branding regulations. In some areas of Spanish America, particularly in Texas and California, the officers of the Mesta became rural justices (*jueces de campo*) with jurisdiction to investigate thefts, robberies, and other crimes in addition to their pastoral responsibilities.

In addition to branding methods, the Spanish ranchers also perfected the techniques for livestock migration. In the Iberian Peninsula sharp contrasts of climate and vegetation made semi-annual changes in pasturage necessary, and transhumance, "the periodic and alternating displacement of livestock between two areas of different climate,"² became a significant characteristic of stockraising in Medieval Spain. The Spaniards transferred this practice to the New World, where they established a system of *agostaderos*, seasonal pasturage used on a communal basis, and *cañadas*, migratory

² William H. Dusenberry, *The Mexican Mesta, The Administration of Ranching in Colonial Mexico* (Urbana, Illinois, 1963), p. 3.

livestock paths or trails. Spanish ranchers throughout the Americas met problems of sparse grazing by shifting their herds to other areas, and they frequently drove their livestock hundreds of miles to fairs and marketing and distribution centers.

Cattle drives posed a number of problems for the *ganaderos*. Since they rarely castrated their stock, they faced the unenviable task of moving herds of wild range bulls; but despite the obvious problems, they frequently undertook long drives comparable to those made from Texas to Kansas during the post-Civil War period. For example, when Francisco Vázquez de Coronado set out from Mexico in 1541, over one thousand horses, five hundred cattle, and five thousand sheep and goats trailed behind his army as it progressed through northern Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, and out onto the plains of Kansas. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was not unusual for Mexican ranchers to drive herds of five hundred to one thousand cattle from pastures near Durango and San Luis Potosí southward to markets near Mexico City, and after the establishment of Spanish settlements and ranches in Texas large herds regularly headed to markets in Louisiana and Coahuila.

To lead the herds and tame and break stock the *vaqueros* used a hair rope or halter called a *cabresto* to tie the wild bulls to the horns of trained oxen who patiently pulled the recalcitrant animals along until they settled to the routine of the trail. Although Anglo cowmen rarely employed this technique for drives, both Spanish and Anglo ranchers used oxen to bring cattle in from the open range.

Another problem arose during livestock migrations for herds frequently invaded plowed and planted fields, causing extensive crop damage. To prevent disputes between ranch-

ers and farmers, Spanish law required that all trail herds be accompanied by an adequate guard and that no one run livestock within a half league of irrigated areas or cultivated fields. Other regulations required that all crops located near ranches be fenced and forbade farmers to kill or injure stray animals found in their fields. Instead they might complain to the local *mesta* official, who then appointed a commission of "honest and dependable" men to investigate the complaint and award payment for damages. Despite these safeguards migratory herds and grazing animals often overran planted fields and farmers protested bitterly. Such disputes were not very different from those encountered by Texas trail herds in Kansas during the 1860's and 70's, nor did the Texans meet with much more success than the Spaniards in solving them.

The Spanish ranchers not only developed methods for working cattle but also contributed sports and games based on the cattle industry. In Mexico the elaborate and complex rituals of the *charrería* are derived from the old methods of working cattle; in the United States professional rodeos and amateur "playdays" recall the heyday of the range industry. On Spanish ranches cowboys enjoyed a game called *carrera del gallo* in which a cock or chicken was buried neck deep in the sand, and horsemen, riding at full gallop, attempted to bend from the saddle and jerk the struggling bird from his prison by the neck. Another popular game was *juego de la vara* (game of the rod), a type of tag played on horseback. The *corrida de toros* (coursing the bulls) in which horsemen demonstrated their skill with cape and pike, and *colear el toro* (tailing the bull)—leaning from a running horse to grasp the bull by the tail and with a quick maneuver throw him to the ground—were also favorite sports. Most of these

games and diversions had their counterparts on Anglo ranches and in the rodeo arena.

In spite of their many contributions to the livestock industry, the ganaderos did little to improve the quality of their cattle. No attempts were made to practice selective breeding or to bring in new bloodlines or develop new strains. Half-wild range stock, the ancestors of the famous Texas Longhorns, formed the basis of the Spanish cattle industry. It should be recalled, however, that Anglo cattlemen did little to upgrade beef production until the introduction of the Shorthorn and Hereford bulls in the late 1870's.

Without the methods developed by the Spanish ganaderos and vaqueros the Anglo cattlemen and Texas cowboys would have found their job far more difficult. The Spanish ranchers were, after all, the first to exploit the semi-arid American plains and prove them to be not only habitable but productive and profitable. Spanish equipment and techniques of stockraising spread throughout North America and provided the basis for the later development of the industry in the trans-Mississippi West. Without the Spanish contributions the great "cattle kingdom" in the United States could not have evolved and flourished as it did.

TWO POEMS

BY WILLIAM OTHA HOPPER

TO MY FATHER ADDRESS UNKNOWN

Thou wast afflicted ever with a mute tenderness,
Marked with the birth pains of thy mother.
Quick death cheated thee of thy milk rights;
Therefore I have feared in me thy parentage.

I have seen now the life wicks in thine own eyes
Turned down into darkness.

What hand at the stricken O of thine exodus
In me reknit thy illusions?
What flame relit in me thy bewildering love?

How shall I now, thy son, vindicate
The contradictions of thy tenderness?
For what was it ever to thee but a place
For the hard world to mould its grim imprint?

I had rather to return to the cool earth
Where thou art not
And there not be with thee
Or be with thee forgot.

Only the sons of gods are fit mildly
To bear the high edicts imposed upon them.
I had rather like the wild tempest
To roar against life's unevenness.

But who may interpose impulse in return for love?
I am thy son—
And I must not oppose in me thy life's release,
Nor envy thee ghost passage, nor alarm thy peace.

OF PATCHES AND BROKEN BITS

I was a thing of patches and broken bits,
A face unliving among the living dead.
Now I am thrown, hurled, spun in evolving chaos:
I am kindled into the living Sahara;
In hell is felt the hand
That reshapes the heart to greatness.

How could I for an hour (for I did so)
Be arrogant and welcome it,
I who love the chirk of the woods sparrow?
Break me rather and let me lie
Unknown among the anonymous,
For I was ever a thing of patches and broken bits.

Bury me beneath an avalanche of flame
On the low common altar
Where the living are sacrificed to life.
Say that for an hour
I knew the clench of the reshaping hand.
Say, too, I was not meant for greatness nor for power.

HE THAT INCREASETH KNOWLEDGE OR ROBERT BURTON ON MODERN EDUCATION

BY EDWARD KRICKEL

(Author's note: The writer was asked for some reflections on teaching by the editor of an alumni magazine, who was a public-relations man. "You're an experienced teacher and a popular one," came the flattering words. With a mild flow of hubris and a mental note to see if his grading had become too easy, he acquiesced. It was easier than trying to prove to a public-relations man that one was too busy. After all, the task was essentially among the services which members of the profession are called upon to donate and not worse than speaking to a local Ladies' Tuesday Tea and Literary Society. The following lighthearted but not, if conscious intent prevail, lightheaded remarks were the issue. They were composed in the midst of papers, lectures, preparations, conferences, committee meetings—in short, the quotidian activities of a teacher. The editor was puzzled at the result and consulted a dean of the college. This worthy was an errant business man who had taught briefly before he took over the business of dean. In his own mind, the logic of his authority made him editor of all publications, teacher of all classes, indeed, as some were uncharitable enough to say, arbiter of whatever was educational. A stiff note of rejection informed the author he had nearly done the college irreparable damage. Further, his air of martyrdom at the hands of those above him in the educational hierarchy was reprehensible, and he would suffer personal and professional harm if he persisted in his efforts to publish this

piece. The author was unaware he had writ so large, though aware, as a teacher of reading, that his generalities had been read as particulars. The response he tended to take as a sign he had written true. There can be no harm to any save himself now his observations are divorced from a local context. But one must be open to ideas, especially in teaching. Therefore, teachers, hail and farewell! Just in case.)

WHY DOES anyone become a teacher? Why, indeed! Isn't the popular image of a teacher that of a peculiar individual (quaint to warped), not really like other people (inferior, the nuance is), possibly intelligent (but, "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich!")—all told, really rather contemptible? The picture was about like this when I was in school. Now that I am known to be a teacher, people politely do not discuss the topic in my presence.

Have there been changes? Small ones only, I deduce. A science or mathematics teacher, for example, people today can accept as in some way useful—you know, serving society and things like that—even though few can say exactly how. But if the subject is art, or literature, or history?

Yet what is new here? With little adapting, the description of a teacher's lot by Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) can stand, after three centuries, when he writes of those "that will be scholars, and that to the hazard . . . of their healths, fortunes, wits, and lives." He continues:

How many poor scholars have lost their wits or become dizzards, neglecting all worldly affairs and their own health, wealth . . . to gain knowledge? For which, after all their pains, in the world's esteem they are accounted ridiculous and silly fools, idiots, asses, doting, and mad Go to Bedlam and ask. Or if they keep their wits, yet they are esteemed scrubs and fools by reason of their carriage

No one desires the stigma of such popular repute. What, however, is the truth of it? Could teachers just be more freakish than humanity at large? I doubt if we can show them to be more noble. Should they be? Or should their rights to the inalienable condition of the human being be insisted upon? This includes, in the words of Manes Sperber, the "right to number among us professional and emotional criminals, brutes of every description, ignoble men and women." Teachers cannot be denied common humanity. Before relapsing into horror or despair, recall that any real excellence *does* deviate, freakishly, from the mass of humanity. Actually, Dr. Sperber was speaking as a Jewish intellectual of his own people; whereas, the role of teacher, because it can be chosen, is a category less fundamental. With quiet modesty (does it mask pride?), the teaching profession can claim, at least, that few enough brutes and blackguards have been attracted into its ranks in comparison to other callings. Fewer, the temptation is to claim. "But," a dry, disinterested voice interjects at this point—a voice interested only in the truth, likely as not a professorial voice—to the deflation of even this small tumescence of pride, "perhaps the rewards are too meager?"

A new consideration, then, really an old one, well-known already. The pay of teachers is less glorious even than their image. The traditional human motives of Fame and Fortune not applying in the case of teachers, our question is still there, unanswered: "Why does one—anyone—become a teacher?"

Burton's picture of teachers, in that time I won't let you put entirely out of mind, depicts merely, solves not:

To say truth, 'tis the common fortune of most scholars to be servile and poor, to complain pitifully, and lay open their wants to their respectless patrons . . . for hope of gain, to lie, flatter, and with hyper-

bolical eulogiums and commendations to magnify and extol an illiterate unworthy idiot for his excellent virtues, whom they should rather . . . vilify and rail at downright for his most notorious villainies and vices. So they prostitute themselves as fiddlers or mercenary tradesmen to serve great men's turns for a small reward. They are like Indians, they have store of gold, but know not the worth of it.

I will speak of college teaching; the problems are analogous at any level. There are positive obstacles solidly confronting the progress of a pilgrim bent upon becoming a teacher, obstacles arrayed like a pride of lions in his metaphorical path. Let us examine a few of the creatures.

Surely King of the Beasts, Lion One, is Time and Money. A college teacher must commence two to four years of extra, formal study after his initial college commencement. His degrees may stop, but his study never. Though now, scholarships abound (recent quaint innovation to many of us), and there was for others government dole, the GI Bill, this extra college training remains costly—in every way, including money. By charity, forbearance, sufferance, endurance, hook or crook, by whip, pistol, and chair, Lion One is dominated.

Lion Two. After this first trial by fang, the new teacher (combination, in his own mind, of Frank Buck, Clyde Beatty, Jungle Jim, and the Phantom) may have dangers unsuspected stalking him. Proud, he meets his first class. Ah. Now. Only to discover in his students a reluctance, a disinclination to learn, belligerent growls from the jungle of anti-intellectualism. What is wrong? An old American custom, for one thing. The students put up a massive resistance, backed by their families; backed, it seems at times, by the entire American tradition. A solution is not easy, and I will forego *why* if I can indicate *what*. Do we not want our young people to

make good grades, that above all things, *regardless of whether they learn anything or not*? "Learn if you *have* to, that is, of course, if it doesn't require too many of those costly textbooks," we suggest to them in a thousand ways, "but remember that ignorance is bliss, and you want to be HAPPY, don't you! Shine your shoes and don't forget to smile!" Bright children *are* fearsome things, especially (to many parents) bright daughters. I know of one faculty wife who admitted she prayed for her daughters to be pretty but not too intelligent. She wished to spare them pain. Herself too, I suspect. Whether it be manifest as frivolity, blasphemy, indifference, perversity, or worse, this anti-intellectualism, one more distortion in the mirror house of American materialism, is the background, and foreground too, in the midst of which most efforts at teaching occur. In college we blame the high school teachers for the poor students we get; they, naturally, blame the elementary teachers, who of course blame the families.

Why, then, does anyone *stay* in teaching once he gets there? Teachers can be found who are such desperate cases as to answer in the face of all sense and reason, "Just lucky, I guess." The firm remain. The less hardy leave to sell plumbing fixtures or take up other sensible practical enterprise, their infirmity anticipated again by Burton:

If this be all the respect, reward, and honor we shall have . . . let us give over our books and betake ourselves to some other course of life! . . . What did our parents mean to make us scholars, to be as far as to seek of preferment after twenty years' study as we were at first? Why do we take such pains? . . . If there be no more hope of reward, no better encouragement, I say again . . . let's turn soldiers, sell our books and buy swords, guns, and pikes, or stop bottles with them, turn our philosophers' gowns . . . into millers' coats,

leave all and rather betake ourselves to any other course of life than to continue longer in this misery

I know what you can reply, if you are mean enough and your mind runs to cliché. "Those that can, *do*. Those that can't, *teach*." Old saw; actually, old Shaw (George Bernard). But among the multitudes who can't do, teem those who can't teach either.

But we've left a lion lurking in the path, a forlorn one really, a kind of Cowardly Lion in the Oz Land of Education. Bureaucracy this one is. Schools have multiplied and become fixtures of the modern scene, like armies and scientists. They are the economic mainstays of many a town, for example. Not surprisingly, their forms have become virtually one with the culture that surrounds them. In America, colleges have become like businesses (so have armies), with an army of bureaucrats and a heavy fire power of business machines to administer them. There is a new voice in the land—that of the Administrator. Purportedly, he oversees the job whether it is an institution of higher learning, an agency of the federal government, or an automobile manufacturing plant. A kind of Ford invention, he is an interchangeable part and can be moved from one job to the other without a single hitch in the assembly line: graduates, money, cars flow smoothly forth without interruption. The highest college official is no longer required to be a learned man in the old academic way who forsook his truest calling in order to serve it in another capacity. Nearer at hand, the new administrator is likely to be a general, a politician, a sausagemaker, a bookkeeper, a television official, or some other kind, almost any kind, of successful public figure. He could still be a lifelong academician, but one with special, not-so-academic talents. Our world (and

not just Lilliput) being what it is, this turn may be a distinct advantage. But to teachers, at least in their blackest moods, their work appears to be sinking chunk by bit beneath the sea of a bureaucracy run by non-teachers who do not know, or never did, or have forsaken or forgotten, what teaching is. These, in turn, are the creatures of the moneyed butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers that dominate the public life of any moment. To them, all truckle. Their most random utterance on education is listened to respectfully, for it might be followed by a check. Perhaps this is only as it must be.

Quaint old Burton kicks against the pricks on this point too:

Now shall these men judge of a scholar's worth that have no worth, that know not what belongs to a student's labors, that cannot distinguish between a true scholar and a drone? or him that by reason of a voluble tongue, a strong voice, a pleasing tone, and some trivantly Polyanthean helps, steals and gleans a few notes from other men's harvests and so makes a fairer show than he that is truly learned indeed And thereupon vilify us and our pains, scorn us, and all learning. Because they are rich and have other means to live, they think it concerns them not to know or to trouble themselves with it . . . and . . . neglect therefore all human learning; what have they to do with it!

What indeed! Shall I be blunt? Money—which talks, as we all know. I do wonder if it says what we think it does. Burton told of a man “not very spruce to look on”:

. . . he was a scholar, whom commonly rich men hate. I asked him what he was; he answered, a poet; I demanded again why he was so ragged; he told he this kind of learning never made any man rich.

Burton notes further that the hierarchs above teachers lightly pass over the enduring things of history, philosophy, and philology “as pleasant toys fitting only table talk.” And, of these

attitudes, persistent as the still, sad music of humanity, Burton adds:

. . . he that can tell his money hath arithmetic enough; he is a true geometrician can measure out a good fortune to himself; a perfect astrologer that can cast the rise and fall of others and mark their errant motions to his own use; the best optics are to reflect the beams of some great men's favor and grace to shine upon him; he is a good engineer that alone can make an instrument to get preferment.

The opportunity comes for a few teachers to join the administrators. One stops being a teacher when one stops learning, and if one is by vocation a teacher, then death comes. While the world sends its minions to congratulate the late teacher exalted beyond the dull sublunary levels of teaching, his recent colleagues are more apt to speak of him in the past tense, or as if he had been apprehended picking pockets. Could the pride of profession show a tinge of envy? Where does a true teacher stand? Burton, quoting an ancient source, says: "He is yet a scholar, than which kind of men there is nothing so simple," adding "so sincere, none better; they are most part harmless, honest, upright, innocent, plain-dealing men."

Those of us that become and remain teachers? Why? I return with more fascination than answers to this problem. Can the answer be as unnatural as love and respect for learning? Are we natural-born lion tamers? Are we hunger artists, in our modest fashion, who have found little we liked nibbling at the workaday world's larder? Or maybe lions ourselves, garbed in lamb's fleece, incongruous pince-nez falling from our bland, round muzzles?

Here I could assert the positive and proclaim what noble, high-principled folk teachers are. And I do say without irony that, on the whole, I join teachers in being proud of the pro-

fession. I just don't want to lie about it. In moments of frustration, self-pity, and such, we may daydream ourselves as the fairest of mortals sacrificed on the altars of our ideals. Earlier, recall, I urged the humanity of teachers, with, unavoidably, quite a few of the attendant ills flesh is heir to. Further illustrations would be to tell tales out of school, and nobody likes a tattle-tale. Certainly, nobody tattled on.

Out of the jungle, still our pilgrim's progress of teaching is not quite over. The ravening beasts described, we meet daily; actually, I suspect, might miss them, superstitiously, as if our shadows disappeared one fine sunny day. They help to define our existence.

What then? The real terrors, their presence felt but not readily seen—could I by chance or paradox here mean glories instead of terrors?—lie in the temptations put to each teacher daily, a kind of goblin market where souls of teachers are haggled for. People have their prices, cynics say. Teachers are people. There is a bargain table each day.

Temptation One: to play God. So much unpatterned plasticity confronts us daily in the classroom. "Give us form. Make us into your image." The voice is loud and clear. It is, though, ambiguous. Is this invitation or challenge? Noble-spirited teachers have decided on the former and succumbed, serving man, they think. In nothing be so cautious, Robinson Jeffers warned. Teachers, ponder well!

Temptation Two: to play Satan. Teachers become the tempters, offer riches and worldly powers to tractable students who obey. "Learn your lessons," this line goes, "and watch your bank accounts grow." Far more insidious—and ironically this may be our truest role—we tempt students simply to be themselves, to reveal, or find, or create their own identities. None of these things can we do for them. For bet-

ter or worse, in sickness and in health, few enough students take the gambit. How many teachers do? I wonder. Devils don't always give you a straight story.

Inadequate Gods, Devils that tempt and tamper, promise but cannot fulfill. Is there such a thing as a teacher? Can teaching really be done? In the most important sense of lasting influence, lasting value, I doubt if we could do it if we tried, and we do. In another way, mostly outside our conscious control, I doubt if we could keep from doing it if we tried. We may teach most when least aware. A terrible responsibility. Sorcerer's apprentices, we start what we cannot foresee, control, or stop.

Who, including teachers, has not been shaped in his thinking and doing, one way or another, by some teacher? And, if there is, between that poised kaleidoscope the mind and how and what it knows, a true relation to the way of the world and the way of what is not the world (each mind's way of knowing, a precarious new mosaic of truth put together of knower, known, and the eternal To-Be-Known), then, everyday, as teachers, in our classrooms, it is reality that we ignorantly construct.

TO THE OLD MAN DEAD IN PATERSON

BY BARRISS MILLS

This tough old poet was cranky
and generous with love and anger.
His poems are alive. They sing
and shout and blaspheme and make love.
They care whether men and women
are alive or dead, and how they live
and die. They won't stand still
on the page or make themselves quotable
in the essays on modern poetry.

He was hated for it. And he tried
to hate back, but there wasn't time
as the poems came, and new poets
came too, and he greeted them all
and fought for them against the silence
and indifference. He went on speaking
when no one would listen, until
they had to listen, and a new
generation swept all the little poets
into dustheaps in the anthologies.

They paid him the ultimate compliment
sons pay their fathers: he hadn't
gone far enough. He'd lost touch
with the times. He was showing his age.
But he went on writing to the end,

better than ever. It wore him
out. A long life of fighting
and loving with words wore him out,
still full of a poet's delight
and rage with life and writing poems.

DIALOGUE OF A WOMAN AND HER DREAMS

BY JUDITH H. McDOWELL

Swimming, whirling through the pictures,
Gnomes and graves and barking dogs,
Dropping down toward shrieking scyllas,
Grinning gargoyles, twisting past
Mummies, bats, and dead men's scrawls,
Screaming, clawing, drowning, then—
Outer perils pall before
The half-suspected inside cave—
Striking back toward ruffled surface,
Flailing, groping, terror clinging,
Then, at last, flung up, gasping
On the rocky beach of self.

A NAIL IN THE HEEL

BY STEVEN TURNER

I CAME awake in the early morning, not yet daylight, with Mama shaking my shoulder. It seemed to be the middle of the night, and I lay there, hating to move, like some kind of chicken egg that knew it was time but just refused to hatch itself. Mama finally yelled to Daddy, who was shaving in the bathroom, "Make that boy stir around, Carl!" Then Daddy was leaning over me, the smell of thick shaving lather on his face, saying, "Up and at it, boy! Get up, get up, get on the rock—it ain't quite daylight but it's six o'clock." He rustled me around, and the next thing I knew I was out of bed, my feet loving the coolness of the linoleum floor. While Daddy finished shaving in the bathroom wash-basin, I leaned over the tub and splashed cold water over my face and neck and back. Daddy growled at me a little when some of the water splattered off to the floor.

In just a few minutes the eggs and sausage were steaming on the plates. It might have been a couple of months since Daddy worked, but Mama was already spending this next payday like Saturday was already here.

While Daddy finished his coffee, he glanced at the front page of the paper. "It looks like this guy Landon is going to be a sure thing on the Republican ticket. Who the hell ever heard of the man?"

Mama watched me gulp down those sausage and eggs. "Look, Carl, I never saw a sleepy boy eat so fast. I think he

ought to go on back to sleep when he finishes eating. A thirteen-year-old boy has no business trying to work on a brick job."

Daddy didn't even glance up from the paper. "It will do him good, make a man out of him."

Daddy kept calling out news items from the paper, but when the Roaming Cowboys came on the radio at six-thirty Mama told him to hush. Daddy snorted something about a bunch of country fiddlers calling themselves "Roaming Cowboys": "A Mississippi cotton patch is the most those old boys ever roamed around in."

Mama said, "You just never had the ear for good fiddling, Carl."

The Cowboys started singing their theme song, "Nowhere to go and nothing to do, just a happy roaming cowboy."

Daddy looked up from the paper again. "One of these days they'll have somewhere to go and something to do. Uncle Sam will have them over there trying to stop Hitler."

The job was out in a rich section of North Jackson on Council Circle. The drive out took ten minutes or so. I sat in the back seat, sniffing the air, watching the early morning haze gradually disappear as the sun came up strong to the east. Mama dropped us off at the job a few minutes before seven. I stretched myself, feeling a little lazy. I hated to think about working, but at the same time I knew I would feel good once I started. Daddy told me to take it easy the first day or so.

While Daddy talked to Ward and the other two Negro bricklayers, the mortar men started sloshing the sand and cement and lime in the mixing trough, and the Negro laborer began piling up bricks in several different places. I felt a little strange when I first realized that Daddy and I were the only white people on the job. I remembered Mama had said

that the Union might call Daddy a "nigger-lover." But after I started working, I forgot all about it. But, later, I did notice that every time a car would slow down, as if the driver was studying the job or the men working, Daddy would raise his head and peer out over the glasses. If he didn't know the driver he would turn back to work, figuring that it was just some curious person playing street superintendent.

I got pretty tired that first day, but I kept going. I liked the smell of the lumber shavings left by the carpenters, the looks of the fresh orange-yellow dirt turned up along the foundations, and the cleanness of the lime and mortar smell. I could feel myself growing stronger with every brick I picked up. I read somewhere that Jimmy Foxx said that milking cows as a boy made his wrists so strong that he became the best homerun hitter in the American League. I hoped that handling those brick would do the same thing for me. My muscles ached, my fingers getting so sore I sometimes felt I couldn't pick up one more brick, but I made myself keep going.

Daddy sure knew how to run a job so that everybody worked as fast as possible. I mean I didn't see any wasted motion at all. It took Daddy and Ward longer to build up the corners of that brick veneer house, but once they got set, you should have seen those bricks fly. There were two long stretches, about thirty feet each, broken by a brick chimney that Ward built practically by himself. Anyway, when those corners were up Daddy took over one stretch while Ward's two Negroes, Roberts and Brewer, did the other. Darned if Daddy didn't just about beat them every time. Roberts and Brewer would shake their heads, making the sweat fly, and say they never saw a brick-laying man like my daddy. Old Ward, working on the chimney, would say, with a big deep laugh,

that these young squirts never worked with experts before—like him and Daddy.

But I really got a big kick out of Roberts and Brewer. Roberts was heavy-set, built very strong, with a flashing gold tooth in the middle of his front teeth. Brewer was a little leaner but very strong too. He had a funny way of moving around while he laid brick, shuffling his feet like a boxer in the corner before a fight. Sometimes Roberts and Brewer would sing while they worked. I guess it wasn't really what you would call singing, but they'd start saying things in rhythm, especially when they were working that long stretch, trying to keep up with Daddy. The sweat poured, while the trowels zipped the mortar and klonked the bricks, and they would sing:

Run those brick, slap 'em right down.
Run those brick, gotta go to town,
And see my honey in a nice silk gown.

They would chant over and over again, sometimes mixing in different words, most of them clean. Once Roberts stopped and asked Daddy, "Mister Carl, you gonna make a bricklayer out of your boy here?" Daddy said, as usual, that he'd knock me in the head if I even looked like I wanted to be a bricklayer. Roberts slapped his hands together, "Who—eee! Your daddy telling you right, Mark." Then he started singing with Brewer again:

Say, Mister Carl, what you gonna do
When your boy wants to lay hisself a brick or two?
Knock him in the head, boys!
Knock him in the head!

Daddy laughed, the sweat running down his undershirt into the old khaki trousers he was wearing. His arms and the

part of his back not covered by the undershirt were starting to bake a red-brown in the sun. I knew he felt tired, because his stomach was sagging over his belt. Now and then when he reached for a brick he would stop and just shake his head for a second or two. Then he'd plunge right on back again. I wished that I was older than thirteen and knew how to lay brick. I could take his place and he could sit in the shade for a while.

We all got to sit in the shade for thirty minutes at noon. Mama drove up with sandwiches and fruit and—the best of all—big quart fruit jars full of iced tea. It was the best-tasting food I ever ate. Daddy sat there in the car with Mama and ate his lunch, but when I finished I went over to talk with Ward, Brewer, and Roberts. Ward told me to make that hanging speech to them. It was really a declamation against capital punishment, something called “Ropes” that I had learned in school during the spring, but I still liked to practice it. When I finished stomping up and down, yelling about those quivering, trembling bodies dangling from the end of ropes, they all clapped their hands. Ward said, “Don’t you see now, Roberts? This boy gonna be a smart shyster lawyer.”

Then, on the afternoon of the third day with everything going so fine, I stepped on a nail sticking up from a piece of lumber. I was half sick at my stomach when I raised my leg and that board followed like it was some kind of ski stuck to my foot. I held my breath and jerked the board as hard as I could. It came loose fast, but I still imagined I could feel the inside of my heel tearing as the nail came out.

It didn’t really hurt much, but Ward said it wasn’t bleeding enough. He said, “When you get hurt and you don’t bleed outside, that’s a bad thing. That means it’s inside bleeding—

the very worse kind, with the poison swelling up under the skin.”

Daddy ran water over my heel, but the nail hole still didn't bleed much. Then Daddy took a small stick for a paddle and spanked my heel some, but that didn't seem to help. Daddy looked at the nail and figured it must have gone up my heel almost an inch. He said I'd better go up and see the doctor. There was one about two blocks away on North State street, a small office in a neighborhood cluster of stores. Daddy asked if I wanted Ward to drive me up there. I said there was no reason for anybody else to stop working. I knew Daddy had been driving everybody hard so he could finish the job on time and make as much money as he hoped. As bad as we seemed in debt, I guess he wanted to make as much as he could.

I kept my other tennis shoe on, and I walked on the ball of my foot and my tiptoes to the doctor's office. There wasn't much to the treatment. The doctor made me get down on my knees with my foot turned up behind me. Then he told me to grab the rungs of a chair and, instead of hollering, to hold those rungs as tight as I could so that any pain I felt could go out through my fingers and hands. He showed me a long hollow needle, like something used to pump up a football. He said he would stick that needle in my heel and pour some medicine down it. That way, he said, the medicine would get all the way down to the infection. He asked if I had been shot for tetanus. I said I didn't know. He said that folks called it lockjaw. I said I still didn't know. I thought he was trying to sell me something extra, so I told him to just put that thing that looked like a pipe into my heel and pour the medicine and that would be fine. I grabbed the rung of the chair, and when he stuck that thing into my heel, twisting it a little as

he did, I must have left permanent fingerprints on that chair rung.

He slapped a little gauze bandage on my heel and told me to stay off my foot the rest of the day at least. The charge was two dollars. When I told him that my daddy would come out next week and pay him, he just took my name and address and told me not to worry. He said that if a two-dollar fee was all he ever lost he'd be richer than John D. Rockefeller.

I walked on back to the job and told Daddy what the doctor said about me staying off the foot. Since it was only about two-thirty and Mama wasn't supposed to come after us until five-thirty, Daddy gave me a nickel and I caught the bus back to the house. We lived only a block from the bus stop.

The car was there, but Mama might have been taking an afternoon nap, so I opened the screen door real quiet down at the bottom of the stairs. Then, from up in the hallway I heard her talking on the telephone. I decided to wait until she finished; then I would jump up and surprise her. I have always liked to surprise people. That's one habit I'm sure trying to break.

I sat on the bottom of the dark steps waiting for Mama to finish talking. I took off my tennis shoe to see if the heel had started to bleed yet, especially since the doctor had jammed that miserable needle up there. But there still wasn't much bleeding. I remembered what Ward said about the dangerous bleeding being inside, and I got a little worried.

Upstairs I heard Mama laugh, soft and musical as the song of a bird. She said, "I know you're the craziest fool in this world." Then the laugh bubbled up a little more.

I didn't know who Mama was talking to, but there were

several of her lady friends that you could describe as the craziest fools in the world.

Mama said, "All right, but I don't know. I don't know what time he'll get through Saturday."

That's the truth, I thought. If Daddy don't keep everybody moving at top speed on that job, he may not finish till Saturday night. And every extra hour after noon is going to cost him some of his profit.

Mama said, "All right. I can't get away later and you can't get away now. We'll just have to wait."

I was tired of waiting for her to finish talking, but I sat still a little longer.

She said, "You talk like I don't want to see you. Don't be so silly."

You get two women on the telephone, my daddy says, and if they got nothing else to say, then they'll start an argument just to give their throats some exercise. Daddy always tells that old joke about the three fastest ways to spread news—telegraph, telephone, and tell-a-woman.

Mama said, "We'll work something out for Saturday." Then she was quiet for a minute before she said, "All right, I'll be down there in just a few minutes. My God, you know you can't come up here."

I was about to slip the tennis shoe back on my foot, but it fell right out of my hands. The rubber heel hit the floor like a soft thump on a big bass drum. I stood up right away, pushing out on the screen door, then taking my hand away quick so that the door slammed loud. While the bang was still echoing, I heard the receiver being slammed back on the phone hook upstairs.

Mama said, "Who's that?"

"Me, Mark."

“What are you doing home?”

I started up the stairs, walking carefully to keep the weight off my heel. “I stepped on a nail. The doctor said I ought to stay off the foot the rest of the day.”

At the top of the stairs the afternoon light streamed in harsh from the window. Mama looked at me closely, a funny and hard kind of expression on her face.

She said, “Lord, you must have a fever! You’re red as fire.”

“No. I just stepped on a nail. Ward says I may be bleeding inside, causing poison. But I ought not have a fever.”

After a few seconds she said, “Were you downstairs there a minute? I heard some kind of noise.”

I looked her straight in the eye and lied. “I just dropped my tennis shoe when I opened the door.”

She followed me into the kitchen. Sitting down, I pulled the gauze off my heel so she could see how bad it was.

She said, “You had no business out there working. You’re too young to be around places where you might get hurt.”

“The job doesn’t hurt me any, Mama. I’m going back tomorrow.”

“A thirteen-year-old is not a man. Your daddy shouldn’t have let you go out there.”

I was choking up so that it was hard to talk. “Look, Mama, it was my fault. I’m the one stepped on the nail!”

“Lord, Mark, can’t you even see a nail as big as a pencil sticking in a board?”

“There was so much stuff around like that. I wasn’t watching, I got careless.”

“Keep your eyes open, Mark. If you want to take care of yourself you have to keep your eyes open.”

“And your ears too, huh, Mama?”

For just an instant that hard kind of wondering expression came over her face again. I looked straight into those pretty

green eyes. Then she turned away from me, picking up her purse and car keys.

"I'll go to the store and get some iodine for that foot. Take yourself a bath, honey. I'll be back in a few minutes."

I nodded my head and she walked out to the hallway. Sitting there, I heard her going down the stairs. The screened door slammed. Then the door of the black Plymouth. Then the car started.

I moved to the living room. Out that window I could see the car going down the hill. Mama stopped at the intersection, but she didn't turn. The car crossed the other street, heading east toward the fairgrounds parking area, where normally there was seldom any traffic at all. I was going to watch the car out of sight, but it never got far beyond the fairgrounds section. Pretty soon it pulled up under a tree in one of the lots. Watching from the apartment the way I was, you wouldn't have been able to recognize anybody in the car. In fact, you wouldn't even know there was anybody in it unless they got out.

I was glad of that. Within three minutes, while I just stood on one foot, hating to move, trying to keep from thinking, a brown car that I didn't recognize pulled up beside the black Plymouth. I could see Mama getting out of the Plymouth. Then she walked to the other car. In about a minute it headed off east toward the thick trees this side of the river.

I limped into the bathroom and ran me the deepest tub I could get without the water running out the overflow drain. Then I took off my clothes and sank down into the tub. I felt like George Raft in that *Scarface* movie, just standing there flipping that half-dollar, waiting for his best friend to shoot him dead. I let my head slip under the deep water, and I waited, holding my breath as long as I could. Then I took a deep breath through my nose. I guess it wasn't too deep

though, because as soon as the burning and choking started I came up fast, spitting water. I just don't see how it's possible to commit suicide by drowning unless you jump off a boat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. And then I'll bet a guy would keep swimming just as long as he could, probably wondering why the devil he ever jumped.

Then I decided that if I really hurried I could pack a bag and get out of the house before Mama got back. I wasn't sure where I was going, but I could go somewhere. Maybe I would just head west to Dallas and find myself a job at that big Centennial show. I didn't have a suitcase. I pulled Daddy's leather-smelling grip out of the closet and stuffed it with underwear and socks. The odor of that sweet grip filled my nostrils, and I thought of Daddy out there on the job, hustling everybody along, with that sweat running into his white undershirt and his glasses getting so wet he could hardly see through them—and all the time worrying that some union men would drive up and start trouble.

I took the socks and underwear out and put the grip back into the closet.

I don't know how long I had been lying on the bed, but I was still there when Mama came back up the steps and into my room. I was staring at the ceiling, trying hard to keep the tears down.

She sat down beside me on the bed. Her face was as beautiful, warm and rosy as I had ever seen it. I tried not to smell the sweetness of her, but I couldn't help it. I wanted to put every thought of her out of my mind completely. I tried to forget her cooking all morning in the hot kitchen or her body bent over the scrub board in the bathtub washing my clothes or her long pretty fingers on the piano keyboard playing some

favorites of mine like "My Blue Heaven," "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," or "The Isle of Capri."

I rolled over on my stomach while she put the iodine on my heel. She just turned the bottle up over the nail hole and held it there for a minute. Then she turned my foot quickly so that no iodine ran down when she took the bottle away.

She said, "Sugar, I never saw you cry over a hurt before. Is this one so bad?"

"No, Mama, it's not really bad."

"Why, back there in the seventh grade that baseball almost knocked your eye out. You didn't cry a bit. And now you're two years older."

"I wish I wasn't."

"No you don't. You're in so big a hurry to be a man you can hardly wait."

She looked down at my heel again. I felt her hand, cool and fresh, softly covering the nail hole.

She said, "It's all puffed up down there. I can feel it throbbing from the pain."

I didn't say anything. She leaned over me and kissed me on the cheek as she stood up. "Go to sleep for a while, honey. After I get your daddy home I'll fix a good supper and wake you up."

"I'm not sleepy."

"All right, I'll play the piano and that'll put you to sleep." Standing by the door, she looked back at me again. "I'll close this door. That way the music won't be too loud."

Lying there, I heard the music, the music that I had been hearing for as long as I could remember, the songs that no matter where I heard them I always connected with my mother's fingers moving over a keyboard.

My heel still hurt, but when I put my mind on the music, I didn't notice the pain nearly as much.

POEMS

BY COLEMAN BARKS

Sept. 20

Mrs. Rice at the nursery school

pry at the lid

of her

no go easy, easy

wave and bless

Jesus loves me this I know

so open your own can of paint

with a church key

start anywhere at eye-level

slop it on the living room wall

like a novelist

knocking out a scenario

(white over grey)

Picasso doing his mistress

in the morning

Mrs. Rice Mrs. Rice

do a dance for my vice

spin around in a trice

one-two-three, one-two-three, thrice

slow down witch

my fancy

sit still & watch the children

We have too much time

to ourselves.

Two rainbow trout
unthaw all afternoon
on the kitchen counter
but won't be able to swim
even when they get soft.

Will they float?

How do you meet new people?

The eyes are still frozen over
but under my palms
the bodies feel just like palms.

Heal! Heal these fishes Lord!
Turn us into bread enough
for company.

Oct. 5

the devil is beating his wife

means rainwater
washes her (with sunshine)

push your animal face—
first into the leaves

wait for something

test the dryness
with a tongue

in the oak gall
the oldest juice

leaf points around your eyes:
be still
a spider is loving
your hair

Oct. 6

in a lawn chair fully tilted
back giving up on society
for the night I can lay here
trying to fall upward

*Do any of the pinpoints
divide and move about?*

yes yes the bright one at top left
is moving in an arc below itself

*You have an imbalance
In time your eyes may cross
Avoid close reading
Sleep in the layout position*

go on slide out of your places
quickly tadpoles
run to the fences
while you can still get back home

someday you children
you Chinese marbles your pinlights
will separate and wander
off the board swimming
into a kinship
on the dark side of my eye

Oct. 8

to my feet
walking on the swampy edge
not frozen yet
this ground feels like bread

Oct. 19

the street bends here
behind heavy foliage
so the sounds are filtered
unevenly but I hear a tuning up:
the racket of harnessing a volunteer band
the air all around
is the air inside
their bass drum dry and tame

somehow the drummer
knows this and
begins his own simpleminded procession
in thumping disregard
of all precedent

dizzy crazily everything shimmers
in response falls down
as he passes:
leaves pile up to his waist

over the leather X across his back
above the drumstick tricks
he does and never stops
though we can't see him anymore
and only hear just barely the regular throb
under a giant crackling

Jan. 4

one blue place in the cloudcover
shaped like an open mouth

no eyes no ears
no other features
for my face to match:

winter's napping mouth
full of daylight

THE CONFUSION OF MY SHOVEL

It wasn't cruelminded
but the confusion
comes back to me,
the sense of not knowing
what I was going to do,
until afterwards.

The dirty wings like veins
along his back waiting
to begin again,
one old cicada
of those that droned me somewhere
from the sleeping porch at home,
like a hand resting on the cover
was still here.

Kittsu had come up on him
(She was peering in her flowers)
and screeched. The shovel was handy:
I went and folded in his burrow.
But then I kept at it
dug down and found him scrambling up
and flipped him onto the path.
We all watched
as he drowsily felt around.

The shovel was up,
and I let it fall.
And it keeps falling
tonight slick as a scar
in the sleeping earth
I have been standing on.

THEME AND STRUCTURE IN *THE FATHERS*

BY FREDERICK K. SANDERS

THE *FATHERS*, Allen Tate's sole published venture in fiction,¹ is, not surprisingly, a Civil War novel. What distinguishes *The Fathers* from the more typical Civil War novel, the kind, of which *Gone With the Wind* is the archetype, so easily turned into a Hollywood film, is the complexity of the relationship of theme and structure, brilliantly accomplished, which precisely defines the nature and significance of the events that tore apart the South and the nation, and creates a unified work of art. The relationship of the novel's structure to its theme is the subject of this discussion.

The basic theme of *The Fathers*² is the break-up of the Old

¹ *The Fathers* is the only fiction by Tate published in book form. He has had, however, one other work of fiction to appear in print. In a letter to the author dated July 20, 1962, Mr. Tate wrote: "*The Fathers* was not originally planned as a novel with a coherent plot. At first I intended to make it a chronicle, using fictitious names, based upon one side of my family—the 'tidewater' strain. This was to be contrasted with another strain, the 'Scotch-Irish,' and I wrote a long 'story' about this strain entitled 'The Migration' which appeared in *The Yale Review* in late 1933 (or early 1934) [It appeared in *The Yale Review*, XXIV (September, 1934)]. I couldn't find a way to bring the two elements together. In the spring of 1936 I decided to abandon the chronicle form and do the 'tidewater' story as a novel. Part I was finished in the summer of 1936; I finished Part II late in 1937; and the whole was done by August 1938."

² In the French translation of the novel, the title is *Les Ancêtres*, which suggests the title's relationship to the theme. Major Buchan is the last inheritor

South in general and the Virginia ante-bellum society in particular. This theme involves two essential factors: the loss of the meaning of traditional forms, rituals, and patterns of behavior, and the change from a dominant concern for the public order to a dominant interest in the needs and impulses of the individual.

A single scene, the pivotal one of the entire novel, will serve to show the primary characteristics of structure as Tate uses it to reveal theme. This scene, concerning the events which occur at the Buchan Alexandria home on April 12, 1861, brings together the two central figures of the novel, who are the heads of their respective families. Major Buchan, the patriarch in a disciplined social order based on an agrarian economy, is the embodiment of the values and limitations inherent in that order. George Posey, the Major's son-in-law, represents the Southerners who by 1860 would not or could not accept the Major's civilization.

In its structure, the scene reflects the broad outline of the novel's theme. It begins with a public occasion, the newsboys' cries in the street that Fort Sumter has been attacked, and ends, after a private conference, with George Posey leading a group of men from the Buchan house. The movement of the entire novel and the movement of the April 12, 1861 scene, as always, is from the public occasion, the public order, to the private world of George Posey, who presides, leads, dominates, and ultimately survives, though Major Buchan and Pleasant Hill, the world of the old order, are destroyed. For Tate believes that with the collapse of a traditional so-

of a traditional order that his ancestors had handed down to him. But the title looks both ways, because George Posey is an ancestor of the new order, the modern world, from which point in time the elder Lacy is telling the story.

ciety, however imperfect, there is a shift of emphasis from an ordered public world to the greater imperfections of an exaggerated, unprincipled individualism.

The scene is interrupted just as it begins by a time shift which provides an account of how George Posey, with Major Buchan's sanction, had come to control the Buchan property. It is revealed that George, instead of freeing a family of slaves according to the Major's instructions, has sold the slaves and applied the money to the Major's debt at the bank. George Posey is called a "man of business" because he naturally regards all items in terms of their cash value, and because he puts upon a money basis the cultivation of the land at Pleasant Hill and requires that the overseer be responsible "in terms of strict economy."³

Despite the changes in the Buchan world resulting from the intrusion of George Posey, the Buchan family is still together. Mrs. Buchan has died, it is true, but the old order provided for expected events such as that; a death did not break up the family. The old order has not provided for the unexpected events of April 12, 1861, however. Here the national crisis, the Buchan family crisis, and the personal crisis of George Posey who must make a choice alone, intersect and become part of the same historical moment. Here the Buchan family breaks apart, and the tragic effect of George Posey's enslavement to private impulses alone is prophetically indicated. In terms of the continuity of the old order, the Buchan family is never again together after this scene; when it is over the stable family pattern is forever dead.

The focus shifts back to the scene at the Buchan home, and the first details suggest that strained relationships in the

³ *The Fathers* (Denver, 1960), p. 133. Page references to this volume are hereafter cited in the text.

Buchan family already threaten its unity. Lacy, the Major's youngest son, is aware that, but does not understand why, his sister, Susan, is keeping George's young sister, Jane, from seeing him although he has a boyhood crush on her, and Susan knows it. This is followed by an unexplained reference to some marital difficulty between Brother Charles Buchan and Lucy, his wife.

When the conversation turns to Fort Sumter, Major Buchan declines to accept the inevitability of war. Though a member of the old Southern order, he does not support the Confederacy because he is still holding out for a parliamentary solution, and participation in secession would eliminate that possibility. In his Unionist sympathies and his stubborn insistence on the viability of a political solution for the sectional conflict, Major Buchan is an expression of Tate's idea that the South lost the war partly because she had waited too late to separate from the North. Earlier, in 1930, Tate had observed: "The South, as a political atmosphere charged with eighteenth century ideas, did not realize her genius in time. She consistently defended herself with the political terms of eighteenth-century liberalism, a doctrine better suited to the middle-class economics of the North, into whose hands she neatly played. So, waiting too long, she let her more powerful rival gain the ascendancy."⁴

But others in the family, Cousin John Semmes and even young Lacy, insist that the conflict begun at Fort Sumter will involve them all. Sensing sympathy for the Confederacy, the Major turns to George Posey and asks if he is still a good Union man. That he should turn to George at all is significant in itself, granting as it does a certain amount of authority to

⁴ "Remarks on the Southern Religion," *I'll Take My Stand* (New York, 1930), p. 168.

George's opinion. Earlier in the novel George, upon hearing that South Carolina had seceded, had remarked of President Buchanan: "The damned old fool ought to reduce Charleston to ashes!" (p. 122). George's Union sympathies are clear, and yet when Major Buchan asks him the question directly, he repeats the question rhetorically to the Major's older son, Semmes, and hesitates to answer. This reaction reveals two important qualities in his character which figure prominently in the development of the novel's theme.

The first quality apparent is George's need to identify himself with Semmes Buchan. Here this need is overtly demonstrated for the first time, and thus the scene fills out what has been an important part of George's friendship with Semmes from the beginning. George can not identify himself with the abstract concept of either the Union or the Confederacy, but he can identify himself with a man who believes in such concepts. For George, Semmes is that man.

The second quality, what Walter Sullivan calls George's moral neutrality,⁵ is evident in George's hesitation to reply. When George, instead of answering, says to the Major "there's no discourtesy in my failure to reply. I am thinking" (p. 141), Cousin John Semmes becomes completely exasperated. He interrupts to say:

Well, we better leave George Posey to his thoughts. And mark ye, Lewis Buchan, your son-in-law is too damn rich for his sense of responsibility. I know you [George] can't be bought; I know you're as honorable as the next one. I don't know what side you'll take, you won't take the side that offers you advantages—you'll take the side you can buy. You think you can buy anything." (p. 142)

⁵ Walter Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," *Hopkins Review*, VI (Winter, 1953), 136.

John Semmes is right: George can take the side of either Yankee or Confederate because there is no principle involved for him.⁶ Of George's hesitation even after John Semmes's criticism, the narrator observes "that he was not insulted, but genuinely perplexed" (p. 142). This is George's personal crisis. Lacking a moral basis for his choice of sides, George must act from some personal impulse. Not knowing what impulse to follow, he hesitates. His hesitation is part of the price he pays for lacking allegiance to a code or tradition outside of himself.

These two details, George's turning to Semmes for support and his hesitation, show the individual dominated by his private feelings and not the public order, and define further the overall theme of the novel. For George rises to a position of responsibility and leadership as Major Buchan's influence decreases—a pattern already clear in the change of control of the Buchan property. George finally does choose the Confederacy, though he assures Major Buchan "that I do prefer the Union" (p. 149). But George's choice of the Confederacy

⁶ The relationship of economics and morality, a major element in the theme of *The Fathers*, has been defined at length by Tate in "What Is a Traditional Society?" in *Collected Essays* (Denver, 1959), p. 303: "The material basis of life, in such a [traditional] society, is not hostile to the perpetuation of a moral code, as our finance-capitalist economics unquestionably is. It is an old story by this time that our modern economic system can be operated efficiently regardless of the moral stature of the men who operate it.

"The kind of property that sustains the traditional society is not only *not hostile* to a unified moral code; it is positively the basis of it. Moreover it is the medium . . . through which that code is passed to the next generation. For traditional property in land was the primary medium through which man expressed his moral nature. . . . Finance-capitalism, a system that has removed men from the responsible control of the means of a livelihood, is necessarily hostile to the development of a moral nature. Morality is responsible to a given set of conditions." This statement defines the basis of the charge John Semmes makes against George Posey on April 12, 1861.

is not a moral decision. It is simply the decision that best fulfills his needs.

Seeing that George will not reply to John Semmes, Susan, his wife, intervenes: "Mr. Posey has borne a good deal from his wife's family. Perhaps the time has come when he will not bear it any longer" (pp. 142-143). This ambiguous defense of her husband raises questions about their marriage which occurs immediately to the narrator: "what had Susan and George been saying to each other when they were alone?" For "as [her] words came forth they dragged with them, from some hidden depth, a judgment of which she herself until that moment had not been quite aware" (p. 143). Here differences in attitude toward sex, presented at length elsewhere, impinge obliquely upon the scene, the meaning of which is completed later when the elder Lacy reflects:

There is no doubt that he [George] loved Susan too much; by that I mean he was too personal, and with his exacerbad nerves he was constantly receiving impressions out of the chasm that yawns beneath lovers; therefore he must have had a secret brutality for her when they were alone." (p. 185)

Susan's words look back to the references early in the scene to Lacy's affection for Jane Posey and to the marriage of Charles and Lucy, which, however much a failure, did not hold the horrors that marriage to George Posey did; and at the same time they look forward to the ultimate tragedy that George brings into the Buchan family: he is finally unable to bear anything of what the Buchans as a family embody.

By the end of the scene, Major Buchan, who is adamant in his Union sympathies, stands alone in the Buchan family—alone, significantly, for the first time. With the Buchan family splitting apart, the old order no longer holding together its

own blood relationships, the scene ends with George Posey leading the group of Confederate sympathizers from the house. This detail graphically points to the pattern of the second half of the novel, where the Posey world dominates.

I have gone into considerable detail with this scene to illustrate how thoroughly Tate has compressed into twenty pages every significant element of the novel's theme. The development of the scene contains in miniature the development of the entire novel. It begins with the public occasion, which is in turn interrupted by an account of how George Posey had gradually gained a position of strength and control in the traditional order itself even before the national crisis, and therefore is evidence of the decay already in progress by 1860. The climax occurs with the telling question that the Major puts to George, a question which comes at approximately midpoint in the scene. Then Susan's unexpected defense of her husband, and its suggestion of some mysterious conflict within the marriage, introduces another fundamental distinction between Buchan and Posey worlds. The scene culminates in the dominance of George Posey, who, despite his perplexity in the face of a necessary commitment, ends by leaving Major Buchan, whose influence as a factive personality is essentially over, to himself, and leading the group from the Buchan house. All scenes in the novel are carefully constructed, but none shows more dramatically the crucial importance of structural development in relation to theme.

In this scene the use of the time shift, a device developed by Ford Maddox Ford, illustrates another characteristic of the narrative. Time shifts grow naturally out of the use of a narrator reminiscing, for a person does not necessarily remember details in chronological order; they are skillfully manipulated throughout the novel and function in several

significant ways. In this instance, the time shift obviously adumbrates the philosophical reasons for the dilemma of George Posey later in the scene, and provides the basis for John Semmes's judgment.

But the juxtaposition itself, the throwing into sharp relief the beginning of the war and George Posey's ideas about money and economics, has its own meaning. For Tate's feeling is that the war must be understood in terms of the attitudes peculiarly related to the economics of an industrial society which were altering the way a man felt about himself, his private life, and the public order. Although the novel qualifies as a Civil War story by virtue of the years with which it deals, 1858–1861, Tate is not writing about slavery and the Civil War itself, both of which, however frequently brought together in a simple cause-and-effect relationship, are considered peripheral to the fundamental significance of the events changing the South in the middle of the last century.

What Tate accomplishes in this scene by the use of the time shift is a juxtaposition that places in dramatic focus the two forces that together bring an end to the traditional order. Of the two, the war is the more cataclysmic but ultimately the less decisive factor in effecting the change that occurs. For the war does not alter the Southerner's way of seeing himself as the new economics does. The crucial importance of the changing attitude toward money comes across not because the narrator spells it out—one suspects that the elder Lacy may not be fully aware of how significant it is that he remembers George's handling of the family business in conjunction with the bombardment of Fort Sumter—but because the juxtaposition made possible by having the time shift occur at the precise moment it does in the narrative emphasizes the point, and thus further defines the theme.

A third characteristic in the relationship of structure to theme in *The Fathers* is the repetition of certain words and phrases, used in slightly different contexts each time, which accrue meaning as the novel develops. In this scene the significant word is *understand*. Like the word *obey* in *Hamlet*, which is repeated by various people in different situations so that the full implications of the word are revealed, *understand* is carefully placed in certain scenes in *The Fathers* in order that its importance can be thoroughly explored.

Thus when the point at issue becomes whether or not George will consult the Major on the political choice of Union or Confederacy the way the Major expects his own son, Semmes, to do, the Major and George have the following exchange:

"... I am still the head of the Buchan family. Young as you are, I presume you are the head of your family. We understand each other."

"... Major, I am gratified that we understand each other. Frankly, sir, I do not understand the present necessity of this conversation."

"My son You will decide whether you can act as a member of my family. That is all I meant by our understanding." (pp. 144-145)

Obviously the two men do not understand each other, and their conversation is expected to reverberate with an earlier conversation between Semmes and Lacy:

"Brother George swore at Sister and rode off."

He jumped up and walked across the room; he turned to face me.

"Are you sure he swore at her?" He looked more solemn than I had ever seen him. "Didn't he just swear!"

"Yes, brother," I said, and he came over and patted me on the shoulder

"Lacy, they don't understand George Posey." (p. 20)

This conversation occurs on the day of Mrs. Buchan's funeral, and Lacy is telling Semmes that George, on a sudden impulse, has left before the funeral service. To the representatives of the old Southern order, the Buchans and their friends and servants, George's refusal to participate in this public occasion is incomprehensible. In Lacy's mind, there is even the imagined judgment of his dead grandfather, Dr. Buchan, who would have felt that "people didn't ride suddenly away from places where they were expected to be" (p. 22).

Semmes, who had originally introduced George to the Buchan family, provides the one sympathetic response to George's impulsive behavior. When Semmes says, "they don't understand George Posey," he suggests his own feeling that George's act may be justified in some personal way, and he implies also that in his opinion *he* does understand George. Semmes is not totally committed to his father's attitudes, to an unchangeable faith in the necessity of the old order as is, and he admires in George, as Lacy later observes, the "mystery and imagination, the heightened vitality possessed by a man who knew no bounds" (p. 179). Yet Semmes does accept the traditional concept of a code of honor that his father's civilization has given him, and indeed accepts that code with perhaps a too literal understanding of its requirements.

Thus if George Posey curses Susan, even though she is his wife, Semmes would feel obligated to require George to make proper apology for his language. Susan is, after all, his sister, a Buchan before she is a Posey. Semmes is caught between his own divided loyalties. Although he feels that he must act within the traditional code of honor, he himself does not require that George Posey observe the forms of the old order. If Grandfather Buchan judges George Posey for leaving the funeral, he would have been equally critical of Semmes's

willingness to give George the right to that act. The definition of the overall theme in this instance is accomplished by a careful and subtle use of the word *understand*, the word over which the old order and the new stumble in the central scene of the novel and, more tragically, in the final encounter between Semmes and George Posey.

For Semmes does not understand George, does not understand the danger of living as "a man who knew no bounds," and he pays with his life for George's well-intentioned but erratic impulses. Near the end of the novel, when George and Semmes face the task of settling with George's mulatto half-brother, Yellow Jim, for his attack on Jane Posey, the impending tragedy is crystalized in the use of the word *understand*. George says, "We have something to attend to, haven't we, Semmes?" and Semmes replies, "I see we understand each other" (p. 250). But the reader knows, because of the two earlier scenes, that Semmes is wrong.

Semmes shoots Yellow Jim because, just as he would have felt it necessary to correct George had he actually sworn at his sister on the day of his mother's funeral, he believes he must now avenge his fiancée's honor. On sudden impulse George shoots Semmes because, not believing anything one way or another except that Semmes has taken from him the control of the fate of his own slave, his property, he feels that he must eliminate the person that denied him control of the situation. As George fires at Semmes he exclaims, "I never had any idea of killing that nigger" (p. 258), a remark which clearly reveals how mistaken Semmes was to think that he understood George Posey. Of course, George never had any idea of killing Semmes either, but he did kill Semmes, an act which tragically reveals George's inability to understand Semmes and the concept of honor to which Semmes adheres.

This final encounter between George and Semmes illustrates that the conflict between the Major's view and George's view is resolved only when the latter destroys the former, and the traditional society succumbs to the new order with its dangerously appealing emphasis on the individual's private experience as above all the most significant reality.

The Fathers is a novel unusually rich in meaning. The consequences of the collapse of a traditional society, the changes that occur in attitudes toward one's personal conduct, the family, sex, money and economics, traditional religious rituals and social customs, and the public order in general, are fully explored and articulated. In presenting these elements, words, details, and scenes constantly gather about them implications that far transcend what their literal importance might indicate in a casual reading. The relationship of theme and structure suggests the novel's richness and has three particularly significant characteristics. The first is the development of a scene so that the structure of the scene itself reflects the overall pattern of development in the novel. The second is the use of time shifts to provide sharp juxtapositions of events which, when placed side by side, define each other more precisely. The third is the repetition of words and phrases throughout the novel in a variety of situations so that the importance of such words and phrases in the context of the entire novel is fully illuminated.

These three structural devices are not used for the first time in *The Fathers*, of course. But in an age in which the idea of "the well-made novel" is one of the current literary clichés, the consummate skill with which Tate uses these devices to render significant the relationship of theme and structure deserves genuine admiration.

ON AN ANNIVERSARY

BY L. H. CHAMBERS

Of all the objects an outmoded
sense of gravity returns,
the year's October bursting-forth
is least: as if the twigs had bred with yellow
leaves and brought us, like the foxtails,
back each year to the same sun
on the same bank; or, with every turning
(all the melted snow unfallen)
the year had flipped again to foetal
dream, plan, accident, and
set us eternally uncurling
from that intimacy in the sun;
as if this anniversary
alone were future's chlorophyll,
or a mere computer of the old
ignorance still before us
in the infinite silver files
of mirrored mirrors.
That embrace is every movement.
Hasn't every curling held all
the others had, and (multiplied)
the others yet unhad? Oh,
I look, with more and more desire,
to see us, close my hands on
these rare days the way I do
your breasts.

A CROSSING AT THE INTERSECTION

BY JOHN TAYLOR

I pass the walking wounded on the street.
When our eyes meet
I look away, though I am walking wounded too.
My eyes are green or blue
Depending on the light you see me in;
My friendly grin
Shows nothing but the friendly edges of my teeth
With nothing underneath.
DON'T WALK the stoplight says where our paths come
Together, dumb
But loud enough to drown us in determined sleep.
The self is hurt we keep
Within the self, within, within. The bell
Rings out to tell
Us we can cross the cross. King's X, and we avoid
The other selves deployed
About this intersection of our scars
While all the cars
Are waiting for the light to change. This moment's ours;
We are competing powers—
Issues of blood are labeled classified
And we divide
Down separations built into the usual grid
Commanded and forbid.

THE BRIERLY SUICIDE: A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD AMBIGUITY

BY CHARLES C. CLARK

CRITICS have long used expressions like “puzzling” or “enigmatic” in describing the suicide of Captain Brierly, one of the three men who pass judgment on Lord Jim for his dereliction in the *Patna* affair. Dorothy Van Ghent, in *The English Novel*, refers to “Brierly, the unimpeachable professional seaman, [who] in some astounding way identifies himself with the accused man, Jim, and commits suicide.”¹ Of course, Brierly’s jump may be taken as a cogent comment on Jim’s; but I think Conrad’s full meaning has been generally missed. And what has been overlooked is suggested by one of the most reliable parts of Marlow’s narration, a part which is a first-hand account. But more of this later.

Marlow, Conrad’s loquacious narrator, introduces part of the story of “Big Brierly” to his auditors relatively early in the evening:

“Big Brierly. Some of you must have heard of Big Brierly—the captain of the crack ship of the Blue Star line. That’s the man.

“He seemed consumedly bored by the honor thrust upon him. He had never in his life made a mistake, never had an accident, never had a mishap, never a check in his steady rise, and he seemed to be one of those lucky fellows who know nothing of indecision,

¹ Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel* (New York, 1953), p. 241.

much less of self-mistrust. At thirty-two he had one of the best commands going in the Eastern trade—and what's more, he thought a lot of what he had." ²

Having described for his listeners Brierly's superiority complex, Marlow tells them:

"... As I looks at him flanking on one side the unassuming pale-faced magistrate who presided at the inquiry, his self-satisfaction presented to me and to the world a surface as hard as granite. He committed suicide very soon after." (p. 58)

Albert J. Guerard, in his *Conrad the Novelist*, presents the explanation of the enigmatic suicide which the majority of Conrad critics seem to accept. The reason for the act, according to Guerard, lies not in racial pride ("Jim's evidence given in the presence of natives") ³ nor in professional pride (following one meaning of Marlow's "he was one of us" [p. 43]), but rather in Jim's function as a sort of soul mirror. "He had recognized in Jim an unsuspected potential self; he had looked into himself for the first time."⁴ And in this analysis, of course, Guerard is relying on Marlow, who says:

"If I understand anything of men, the matter was no doubt of gravest import, one of those trifles that awaken ideas—start into life some thought with which a man unused to such a companionship finds it impossible to live." (pp. 58–59)

But does a vain man like Montague Brierly, "the owner of an inscribed gold chronometer and silver-mounted binoculars testifying to the excellence of [his] seamanship" (p. 58),

² Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Modern Library; New York, 1931), p. 57. All subsequent references to *Lord Jim* are taken from this edition.

³ Albert J. Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 148.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 148–149.

take his own life because he fears that he would jump in a situation similar to the one in which Jim found himself on the *Patna*? This does not seem probable, judging Brierly in the light in which Conrad, through his partially reliable narrator Marlow, has chosen to place him.

The careful reader of *Lord Jim* must constantly remind himself that the reliability of Marlow's narration varies. Douglas Hewitt, in his essay "*Lord Jim*: Conrad and the 'Few Simple Notions,'" says that "the effect of muddlement which is so commonly found in *Lord Jim* comes, in short, from this—that Marlow is himself muddled." Hewitt adds that "we look to him for a definite comment, explicit or implicit, on Jim's conduct and he is not able to give it."⁵

When Marlow reports on the hearing in the Eastern port (presumably Singapore), he is speaking from his own experience. He was there:

"Of course the recollection of my last conversation with Brierly was tinged with the knowledge of his end that followed so close upon it. I spoke with him for the last time during the progress of the inquiry. It was after the first adjournment, and he came up with me on the street." (p. 65)

After telling Marlow "they caught me for that inquiry, you see" (p. 65) and expressing his chagrin with marked emotion, Brierly asked: "Why are we tormenting that young chap?" (p. 66) and offered to put up two hundred rupees "if you just put up another hundred and undertake to make the beggar clear out early tomorrow morning." Then Brierly added:

⁵ *Conrad: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), p. 60.

“ ‘ . . . He must! This infernal publicity is too shocking: there he sits while all those confounded natives, serangs, lascars, quarter-masters, are giving evidence that’s enough to burn a man to ashes with shame. This is abominable. Why, Marlow, don’t you think, don’t you feel, that this is abominable; don’t you now—come—as a seaman? If he went away all this would stop at once.’ ” (p. 67)

Marlow observes that “Brierly said these words with a most unusual animation. . . .” He reports that Brierly became angry when he restrained him from reaching for his pocket-book, that the two walked on, and that Brierly continued his comment:

“ ‘This is a disgrace. We’ve got all kinds amongst us—some appointed scoundrels in the lot; but, hang it, we must presume professional decency We are rusted I don’t care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia, but a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales Such an affair destroys one’s confidence. A man may go pretty near through his whole sea-life without any call to show a stiff upper lip. But when the call comes . . . Aha! . . . If I . . .’ ” (pp.67–68)

Marlow adds:

“ ‘He broke off, and in a changed tone, ‘I’ll give you two hundred rupees now, Marlow, and you just talk to that chap. Confound him! I wish he had never come out here. Fact is, I rather think some of my people know his. The old man’s a parson, and I remember now I met him once when staying with my cousin in Essex last year.’ ” (p. 68)

Now, one may ask, how honest was Brierly being with Marlow? Was his statement about “professional decency” made because he felt that Marlow might expect it from a man of his reputation at this time? And why did he not complete his remark about the “call to show a stiff upper lip”?

Reporting the questioning of the two native helmsmen—and again he is speaking from his own experience—Marlow tells that one of the Malays, very young, “thought nothing” of the abandonment of the ship by her white officers at the time—this, in answer to Captain Brierly’s question (p. 98).

Conrad does not make clear which of the three judges questioned the other Malay, an old man. One may presume from Marlow’s account that Brierly did not question him.

“... To some further questions he jerked back his spare shoulders, and declared it never came into his mind then that the white men were about to leave the ship through fear of death. He did not believe it now. There might have been secret reasons.” (p. 98)

This man had grown old in the service of white men. He suddenly found himself a cynosure in the white man’s mysterious world of officialdom. And, like old men of all races, impressed by the sound of his own rhetoric, he became garrulous. Marlow reports:

“... He wagged his old chin knowingly. Aha! secret reasons. He was a man of great experience, and he wanted *that* white Tuan [italics Conrad’s] to know—he turned towards Brierly, who didn’t raise his head—that he had acquired a knowledge of many things by serving white men on the sea for a great number of years—and, suddenly, with shaky excitement he poured upon our spellbound attention a lot of queer-sounding names, names of dead-and-gone skippers, names of forgotten country ships, names of familiar and distorted sounds, as if the hand of dumb time had been at work on them for ages. They stopped him at last. A silence fell upon the court,—a silence that remained unbroken for at least a minute, and passed gently into a deep murmur.” (pp. 98–99)

Marlow comments that “this episode was *the* sensation [italics Conrad’s] of the second day’s proceedings—. . . affecting everybody except Jim, who sat moodily at the end of

the first bench, and never looked up at this extraordinary and damning witness that seemed possessed of some mysterious theory of defence" (p. 99).

Like an old Southern Negro servant of the nineteenth century, the lascar helmsman had stored up memories of many white men. Could he have been suspected by Brierly of remembering something in Brierly's past of which the reputedly faultless captain had reason to be ashamed? It is significant, I think, that the old native directed his remark about his accumulated knowledge to Captain Brierly, that he "turned towards Brierly, who didn't raise his head. . . ."

This possibility of actual guilt is recognized by Norman Sherry in his recently published *Conrad's Eastern World*. Sherry states that "Brierly, like Jim, has some dark secret" and that

Conrad, in writing Brierly's history, again had in mind the story of the *Cutty Sark*—not the case of murder which provides the basis for 'The Secret Sharer', but the suicide of her master Captain Wallace . . . a very young and successful skipper. . . . The only reason that could be adduced for his suicide was that he helped his mate, Sydney Smith, to escape to the *Colorado* after the murder of John Francis. The death of this famous skipper at such an early age when he was at the height of his career and when there was no strong reason for such an act must have caused a great deal of speculation.⁶

Was Brierly's interest in Jim's running away, as the fat German captain had done, prompted by the feelings that Marlow thinks caused him to offer the two hundred rupees for Jim's flight? Certainly a fear that the Malay helmsman, or someone like him, had knowledge of a dereliction of duty or an act of cowardice in his own past, an act which had

⁶ Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge, Eng., 1966), p. 262.

seemingly gone unnoticed, could have given him the motive for offering Marlow the money. If Brierly had feelings of guilt for something he had done, Jim's refusal to run, his grim determination to take his punishment, would have been agonizing enough to cause Brierly, also "one of us," to deprive himself of the mocking golden symbol of integrity and to jump, not as Jim had jumped, to a life of expiation, but to an escape from the possibility of a shaming that he could not face. To intercept his conduct in this way, as a foil to Jim's, does no violence to the thematic integrity of *Lord Jim*. Indeed, it might be said to strengthen it. And such a reading is in keeping with what we have learned to expect of the great impressionist: every stroke has its purpose.

TWO POEMS

BY WILLIAM J. FREE

THE SNIPER

The darkness stank of piss.
The sniper on stiff haunches
Watched the square of street
Offered by the doorway where he crouched.
The barrel balanced on his knee
Froze his sweating hand.
The drawstring of his anus yanked him tight.
Ball bearing eyes rolled the night
Waiting, waiting,
Listening to the wallpaper peeling.
The street wet with silence.

And the light shineth in darkness;
And God sent a man.

A near-man hid behind a rock
To watch his brother cross the veld.
White knuckles held
White antelope bone,
Not knowing why . . .
Brain pulsed, seeking humanity . . .
Intuition—
Patterns of green dots cross electronic consoles
Swing bone, bashing skull . . .

And on the sixth day God created man
Marching through history . . .

Marching, marching to the sniper
Huddled in the doorway—private Thermopylae—
One of three hundred there to die—
Waiting for the barbarians.

And God sent a man
Down the street
Into the gunsight,
Into the triggerpull.
God sent a barbarian,
A bloody sacrifice
For the sacrificed.

ADVICE FOR A LONELY AFTERNOON

Sit and cry,
 my sad little girl,
Cry your dry
 martini tears,
And order up another
For a rainy afternoon.
It's done with us,
 we know it now,
And you will find a face—
 somehow—
Familiar eyes will know.
 Go slow;
Finish off your drink
And powder up your soul.
Look, the pink
 plastic elephant
Has gored your olive's heart
And holds it tenderly,
 apart,
Above the rim of your glass.
Keep it out of the intoxicating tears,
 little girl.
And never mind—
 now—
 where I am
Or in what drink my heart has drowned—
 don't look around—
Just sip your icy tears,
 little girl,
Fix your face,
 and go out in the rain.

ELIZA GANT AS NEGATIVE SYMBOL IN *LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL*

BY CLAYTON L. EICHELBERGER

FROM the very beginning of his career as a writer, Thomas Wolfe was plagued by the accusation of writing novels too autobiographical in nature, of relying too directly on fact and not enough on imagination. When *Look Homeward, Angel* appeared in Asheville, North Carolina, Wolfe's home town, it was greeted first by a stunned silence, then by a cry of protest rising in quick crescendo. For in the novel many of Wolfe's childhood friends and neighbors recognized themselves, naked—it seemed to them—on the printed page, robbed of their virtues, their faults and blemishes and idiosyncrasies held up for inspection before a critical world. They felt betrayed. They denounced the writer as “a monster against life,” and many critics, hearing the battle cry, joined in the denunciation. “Wolfe never created anything, even in disorder,” said one. “He remembered, he recaptured, he elaborated on things known, and with himself for substructure threw up a great shapeless edifice.”¹

So the tenor of Wolfean criticism was established.

That Wolfe's novels are autobiographical to an unusual de-

¹ L. Kronenberger, “Thomas Wolfe, Autobiographer,” *Nation*, CLI (July 15, 1939), 76.

gree is not to be denied. That he relied more heavily on fact than other successful writers is obvious. Therefore, while a careful analysis of Wolfe's life paralleled with that of his protagonist is biographically interesting, it is of no great significance. In the end it is not where the author gets his material but what he has to say and what method he uses to transform substance into art that are of chief import.

Viewed in this light, *Look Homeward, Angel* and the individual members of the Gant family take on a new dimension and inspire a new interest. Eliza Gant, for instance, becomes not just the mother of Eugene Gant alias Thomas Wolfe, but a character consciously or unconsciously developed in the direction of artistic symbol. As a result, the novel itself emerges as something more than a mere catalogue of the highly subjective memories of an immature youth; it begins to exhibit the fundamental integrity of art.

Both Thomas Wolfe and his mother met the autobiographical charge stirred up by the appearance of *Look Homeward, Angel* "by refusing to admit that she was the original of Eliza Gant." This fiction, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., suggests, made conversation easier.² Yet the possibility remains that their position was not entirely a fictional pose. Perhaps they actually saw in the character of Eliza sufficient artistic selection and control to give some substance to their interpretation. Publicly the Wolfe family stood by Tom loyally; that they had some private reservations about the accuracy of the Eliza portrait is suggested by the fact that his letters to them during this period were essentially defensive. Seemingly the Wolfe family was more troubled by distortion than they were by the obvious use of autobiographical material. "It has

² Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *Thomas Wolfe: The Weather of His Youth* (Baton Rouge, 1955), p. 122.

never occurred to anyone with whom I have spoken here that Eliza was anything but a very strong, resourceful, and courageous woman, who showed great character and determination in her struggle against the odds of life," Tom wrote to his mother in November, 1929. "That is certainly the way I felt and feel about her, and since I wrote the book my opinion ought to be as good as anyone's."³ Assuredly there is no evidence to suggest that he thought of her as other than "strong, resourceful, and courageous." But Wolfe's statement does not convince one that he is telling the whole truth. Admitting the positive qualities he pointed out in Eliza, one may go further to conclude, as he must have known, that his presentation of her is essentially negative in *Look Homeward, Angel*, that guided more perhaps by artistic intuition than by artistic consciousness he gave less than a full portrayal of his mother.⁴

In his Purdue speech, Wolfe assigned symbolic value to the protagonist of his novels. Eugene was, he asserted, "the artist' in pretty much the Harvard Forty-seven Workshop sense of the word—the wounded, sensitive, the extraordinary creature, in conflict with his environment, with the Babbitt, the Philistine, the small town, the family."⁵ Eugene thus stands symbolic of the aesthetic spirit and the quest for freedom inherent in that spirit; and inevitably the character

³ Thomas Wolfe, *Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother*, ed. John Skally Terry (New York, 1943), p. 191.

⁴ Richard Walser, in *Thomas Wolfe, An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York, 1961), finds tragedy in the life of Eliza. He sees in her attempts to gather around herself "symbols of security" the action of "a generous, noble woman compensating for the buffets of fortune in the only way left to her" (p. 59). This observation, while valid, does not diminish her essentially antagonistic role in the novel.

⁵ William Braswell and Leslie A. Fields, eds., *Thomas Wolfe's Purdue Speech "Writing and Living,"* Purdue University Studies, 1964, p. 50.

standing in opposition to him, as Eliza does in *Look Homeward, Angel*, will also have symbolic values.

In *Thomas Wolfe: The Weather of His Youth*, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., interprets Eliza as "the symbol of fruitfulness . . . the earth-mother, timeless and persistently fertile."⁶ But this interpretation is based on "The Web of Earth," and is not applicable when Eliza is studied within the framework of the first novel. Here she can in no sense be considered a gardener. Her essential harmony with nature, the turn of the seasons, her traits of patience and endurance are subordinated to a devouring possessiveness. The "prophetic, brooding instinct" which characterizes her in "The Web of Earth" gives way to aggressive scheming. That this scheming must sometimes rely on the passage of time for fulfillment in no way diminishes its aggressiveness. Eliza's predominant symbolic value shifts radically between *Look Homeward, Angel* and "The Web of Earth"; and this shift in itself suggests artistic control on the part of Wolfe.

While one would hesitate to label Eliza a villainess, her basically antagonistic position in *Look Homeward, Angel* is quite clear. In her maternal possessiveness, in her materialistic acquisitiveness and business enterprise, ultimately in what is not less than compulsive greed, Eliza stands as a symbol of the physical contrasted with the spiritual, and so with Eugene is the embodiment of the central conflict in the novel.

With what one commentator referred to as a "massive possessiveness," the mother clung tenaciously to the babyhood of her youngest child. This maternal possessiveness, while it may positively suggest a strength and in some con-

⁶ Rubin, p. 122.

texts even courage, must be given a negative and unpleasant implication in that it inspires filial dependency and so stands firmly in the way of the growth and maturation of the young man. Eventually, of course, Eugene resisted and rebelled, but his mother's hold did not yield perceptibly. During the summer at Dixieland following his first year at the university, maddened by her incessant probing and bickering concern, he shied away from her. She recognized this and could not understand it. She felt persecuted when he did not spend enough of his vacation time with her. So she created scenes, bursting into tears, murmuring that she had hardly laid eyes on him all summer. Torn by the unpleasantness of such moments, he strained to break away as he forever tried to break away. To young Eugene, she stood as barrier to his own individuality and freedom.

But even more than Eliza's maternal possessiveness, it was her "blatant materialism" that alienated Eugene. Her exaggerated acquisitiveness and frugality are repeatedly underscored by her stingy, "crawling little fires," her watered-down soup, her zealous concern for the conservation of electricity, her child-like mania to hoard—all rising to a climax in Eugene's agonized outburst: "Mama, mama, in God's name what is it? What do you want? Are you going to strangle and drown us all? Don't you own enough? Do you want more string? Do you want more bottles? . . . Do you want the town? What is it?" She replied, "Why, I don't know what you're talking about, boy."⁷

Gradually Eliza's miserliness in little things grew into her obsession with "property" and blossomed forth in her identification with the booster spirit which is a major target of

⁷ *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York, 1929), p. 439. Subsequent citations are from this volume.

Wolfean satire in that it is the most unreserved exhibition of the aggressive free enterprise and materialism which were the antithesis of all he stood for. Materialism, while it may sometimes be attractive and while it may even serve as a means to an end (the realization of Eugene's dream depended upon Eliza's economic support), is essentially evil, for too frequently it engenders a maniac zeal which ravishes the spiritual integrity of man and community. Eventually Eliza and her family were to be ravished in just this way.

Recognizing that Gant was not a businessman and that his goals were far different from hers, Eliza began to take matters into her own hands early in *Look Homeward, Angel*. Altamont was making tremendous gains—that was indicated by the sharply rising values of real estate—and Eliza wanted to take personal advantage of growth and progress. Gifted with an inherent business sense, she was prepared to go on by herself, for she saw that “cooperation with Gant in the purchase of land was becoming more difficult each year.” Wolfe wrote, “And with something like pain, something assuredly like hunger, she saw various rich plums fall into other hands or go unbought. She realized that in a very short time land values would soar beyond her present means. And she proposed to be on hand when the pie was cut” (p. 196). In such a frame of mind she purchased Dixieland. She knew instinctively when she looked at the property that the money she invested in it would double and triple within a few years. The acquisition was evidence of a shrewd business acumen not to be denied, and that sagacity coupled and fused with hunger for success in terms of real estate ownership swept Eliza along to tragic extremes. She became, in short, victim of compulsive greed.

Hundreds of illustrations of the way in which Eliza sacri-

ficed family to self crowd onto the pages of *Look Homeward, Angel*; her portrait is not a pretty or tender one. Continually and consciously she schemed to make money. "She pretended to be proudly oblivious to any disagreeable circumstance which brought her in money" (p. 146). She made her life all work and miserly sacrifice, and she fretted when she saw others enjoying their leisure, remarking that she wished she had time for such things. Eventually she did become a wealthy woman through her manipulation of real estate, but as her material wealth grew, she lost something of much greater value.

Probably more than any other one thing it was her persistently acquisitive and materialistic bent that broke up the Gant family. The decisive step came when she purchased Dixieland and moved in, thus effecting a family cleavage. And then, when she sold the old house on Woodson Street, the one Gant had made for her with his own hands, Eugene saw in the act "the final disintegration of his family." The collapse of the spiritual integrity of family life is, of course, a recurring theme in recent fiction as it is a disturbingly dominant phenomenon in recent American life. Significantly, in this case the blame is placed squarely on the compulsive greed of Eliza.

And it was compulsive. She could not help herself. Although she felt the maternal tie very strongly at times, she was too busy with her plots and schemes to nourish it properly. Her reactions to the needs of her children were always late, just as her humanity and love were late in the case of Ben. In the enormous silence of the October morning on which Ben died,

Eliza straightened out Ben's limbs, and folded his hands across his body. She smoothed out the rumpled covers of his bed, and patted

the pillows, making a smooth hollow for his head to rest in. His flashing hair, cropped close to his well-shaped head, was crisp and crinkly as a boy's, and shone with bright points of light. With a pair of scissors, she snipped off a little lock where it would not show. (p. 558)

Ben was dead. The sympathy one feels while reading this poignant scene is not for Ben, but for Eliza, a mother who too late realized, subconsciously at least, that she had somehow failed in her duty to her son. Gant suggested, "Let's try to make the most of what time's left." Eliza gravely answered, "There are a great many things I'd like to do over again." But she could not change. She was what she was. Although she strongly felt the loss of a son, she was soon drawn from this tender moment back to the bargainings and tradings of the real-estate world. At one point, provocatively alluding to Captain Ahab's moving soliloquy which follows the first quarter-deck scene in *Moby Dick*, Wolfe wrote, "Eliza's life was moving by a half-blind but inevitable gravitation toward the center of its desire . . . Her life was on rails" (p. 129).

Whether or not Wolfe was justified in so strongly relating Eliza's compulsive materialistic thrust to the collapse of the Gant family is debatable. Perhaps he succumbed to the danger of over-simplification pointed out by John Maurice Clark in his charge that current literature "seems starkly and dangerously negative" toward the economic system, "presenting it as an arid waste of sordidly selfish and otherwise purposeless striving."⁸ Certainly, if it is true that Wolfe was biased in his treatment of economic America, one need not search far before he finds the basis for that bias. The theme is an old one, egocentrically presented: the struggle of an artist

⁸ John Maurice Clark, "Economic Means—To What Ends?" *American Economic Review*, Part 2, Supplement (December 1950), p. 49.

in an alien world. All of Wolfe's work reflects the viewpoint that the modern artist, seeking for spiritual fulfillment, for the freedom to recognize the great truths of experience and living which cannot be given monetary evaluation and to express them creatively, lives in protest against his society. Wolfe's chief criticism of the American social system was "that it gave primacy to economic rather than spiritual fulfillment."⁹

The disjunction between artist and society is not, however, the final theme in the Wolfe novel: it is emblematic of a still deeper cleavage between the physical and the spiritual, a cleavage inherent in the very nature of man. Consistently Wolfe views man as a physical creature, but one "trailing clouds of glory . . . from God who is our home." As Richard S. Kennedy explains in his lengthy analysis of Wolfe, "Man's physical life is subject to the determinism of Life Force, which threads its way through a world of change, but his spirit represents a free will operating within these limitations, an individuality which can respond intellectually and emotionally, make choices, and strive to achieve an understanding of life's complexities."¹⁰ The duality thus described is the natural state of man, who, accordingly, is fated to endure the inevitable tension which results. The individual spirit, once it is intellectually awakened, constantly seeks fulfillment through understanding and identification with the eternal; but it is held captive, momentarily at least, by the Promethean chains of this mortal world.

And so we arrive at the fundamental negative value of

⁹ William F. Kennedy, "Economic Ideas in Contemporary Literature—The Novels of Thomas Wolfe," *Southern Economic Journal*, XX (July 1953), 49.

¹⁰ Richard S. Kennedy, *The Window of Memory: The Literary Career of Thomas Wolfe* (Chapel Hill, 1962), p. 130.

Eliza Gant in Wolfe's first novel. In the "Proem" which stands as preface, it is the mother who brings us into, who binds us to this physical world: "Naked and alone we came into exile. In her dark womb we did not know our mother's face; from the prison of her flesh have we come into the unspeakable and incommunicable prison of this earth." It is from this physical prison that artist and individual seek to escape into the timeless, the eternal, the ideal—into spiritual understanding and self-discovery. It is this physical reality which impedes and frustrates the search for the forgotten face, the unfound door, the lost lane-end into heaven.

In *Look Homeward, Angel*, then, Eliza Gant is symbolic of the physical, material world which stands as an obstacle to spiritual discovery and fulfillment. Artistically she represents the negative side of the conflict which gives both substance and structure to the novel and which turns it into much more than mere autobiography.

ON CONTEMPLATING CORLON

BY LUISE PUTCAMP, JR.

Come join me in uneasy thrall
Where plastic looks like mineral,
Eons' excruciated crust
Here duplicate in chemists' dust.

Lately I wonder when my bone
Turned sham as that fantastic stone
And in what stealth were brain and hide
So synthesized and falsified.

There was a time I thought me real,
The heart burned, the nerves could feel.
Now all has hardened in a block,
Symmetric, slick as bogus rock.

Eye finds it satisfactory, but
Something is gone. Who can say what?

STUDY IN KORE

BY STANLEY PLUMLY

“Because it reflects a tiny image of the person gazing into it, the Greeks called the pupil of the eye *kore*, or maiden.”

T. S. Dosch

I

I become the image
quick in that point of light
the all-too-literal photography
of your eyes, twice-fixed
and firmly there
to float back into
the seeing mind,
transfixed in the imagination
to the sight I have become.

II

The day is clean.
The sun only once in the sky.
If I try to hold it like a fish
in my eye, it explodes
its water instantly,
and I see everything and nothing.
So I must imagine that you are still
there even as mirage,
or even perhaps that I am and seen.

COTTON MATHER: THE MAN AND THE MYTH

BY WILLIAM M. RICHARDSON

THE CAREER of Cotton Mather is a study in irony. Sincerely if mistakenly believing that he was in communication with a God who assured him that he was to do great things in His service, Mather's earthly rewards for his prodigious labors in the vineyard of the Lord were the loss of thirteen children, two wives, and a disillusioned old age. His admirable loyalty to his father and his faith embroiled him in endless controversy and earned him only the scorn and contempt of many of his contemporaries. However, the irony did not end with his death. Posterity, sensing a ready-made scapegoat, has taken up where his contemporaries left off and created a monstrous stereotype of Puritan evil and named it Cotton Mather. Today the man is so obscured in the myth that virtually no one, with the exception of his biographers, can find anything good to say about him.

Those historians who decry the Puritans point to him as the very embodiment of the Puritan vices. In him, their hypocrisy, their cant, their spiritual arrogance, their intolerance, their bigotry, their theocratic pretensions, and their intellectual sterility exist undiminished by any redeeming virtue. The defenders of Puritanism, although admitting that such a view of Cotton Mather is largely true, demur, maintaining that Cotton Mather is a caricature rather than a stereotype, that he represents a degenerate Puritanism, and

that in him the characteristic vices of Puritanism exist in greatly exaggerated form.

Even the critics who are not directly concerned with the historical controversy over Puritanism are no kinder to his memory. Darrel Abel calls Mather a "monster of vanity" and derides his spiritual posturings and repentings.¹ The editor of his *Diary* questions the validity of his mystical experiences,² and Vernon Parrington dismisses his religious exaltations as flowing from a "root of egoism."³ Although many of the judgments posterity has passed upon Cotton Mather have a certain superficial validity, they are not entirely fair to his memory and often take the form of overhasty generalizations. However, there are a number of reasons for such a misunderstanding of both the man and his motives. He was unfortunate in having lived and worked when the old orthodoxy was dying, and he was doubly unfortunate in being the son of the highly orthodox preacher-politician Increase Mather, who, in turn, had the misfortune of being a witness to his own political demise. The last great representative of a clergy that had been mighty in the councils of New England, Increase Mather fought vigorously and bitterly to uphold the power and prestige of that clergy among its parishioners, to maintain the high standard of discipline of primitive Congregationalism, and to maintain Harvard College as a fountain of orthodoxy. His son, displaying more loyalty than judgment, took up his father's quarrel. However, times were

¹ Darrel Abel, *American Literature* (Great Neck, New York, 1963), I, 57-61.

² Worthington Chauncey Ford, "Preface," *The Diary of Cotton Mather* (New York, 1911), I, xii-xv.

³ Vernon Louis Parrington, "The Twilight of the Oligarchy," *Puritanism in Early America*, ed. George M. Waller (Boston, 1950), pp. 35-53.

against them. The Mathers lost, and posterity has accepted the verdict of the victors.

Perhaps because of his association with a losing orthodoxy, Mather's own writings have darkened his posthumous reputation. His chief claim on posterity rests in his *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Because he loved and respected those grim divines who directed the destiny of the New Canaan struggling for survival in the wilderness, believing that their work was good, he magnified their virtues and glossed over their faults. Thus he has ever since been identified as one who possessed as well as applauded the intolerant bigotry that drove a Roger Williams into exile and condemned Quakers to the gallows. Few of his critics have noted the proud entry in his Diary in which he records that he

ran the Hazard of much Reproch by testifying in that Sermon, against the Persecution of erroneus and conscientious Dissenters, by the *civil Magistrate*. I feared, that the *Zeal* of my Countrey had formerly had in it more *Fire* than should have been; especially, when the mad *Quakers* were sent into the *Gallowes*, that should have been kept rather in a *Bedlam*. I did therefore on this great Occasion bear my Testimony; hoping, that if so, it would bee accepted both by God and Man. I think, I am the only *Minister* Living in the Land, that have testified against the *Suppression of Heresy* by *Persecution*. And I hope, the Lord will own mee with a more singular Success, in the Suppression of Heresy by Endeavours more *spiritual* and *evangelical*.⁴

Moreover, few of them have bothered to point out that his accounts in the *Magnalia* of the controversies which had racked New England in the past were, in spite of their bias, hardly the work of a bigot. He finds matter for praise as well

⁴ *The Diary of Cotton Mather*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York, 1911), I, 149.

as condemnation in the career of Roger Williams; he is careful to distinguish between the older Foxian Quakerism and the kind typified by William Penn; and most of his scorn for the sect is reserved for such lunatic pretenders to the name of Quaker as the infamous Tom Case and his disreputable followers. He concludes his discussion of these matters by quoting at length from a sermon in which enforced conformity is specifically denounced. It was, moreover, a sermon which upheld the basic right of a man, regardless of his religious affiliation, to the fruits of life, liberty, property, and family.⁵ Worth noting also is the fact that among the many virtues he assigns his idol Sir William Phipps is a devout belief in liberty of conscience and a great love and respect for all "*Godly Men*" regardless of their religious persuasion.⁶

Mather's writings upon witchcraft have also had an adverse effect upon his reputation. A pamphlet written in 1688 is credited with precipitating the hysteria of 1692, and Mather's official history of the Salem witchcraft trials, written at the behest of a number of the leaders of the colony, has been taken as evidence of both his complicity in and sympathy with the excesses perpetrated by the judges presiding at the trials. Although later scholars have pointed out that he was, from the beginning, opposed to the admission of spectral evidence and that in writing his account of the trials he was, because of his belief in the integrity of the judges, guilty of perpetrating a half-truth,⁷ he has ever since been associated in the popular mind with the witchcraft persecutions.

⁵ *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford, 1853), II, 535-536.

⁶ "The Life of Sir William Phipps," *Selections*, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1926), pp. 259-261.

⁷ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (Ithaca, 1956), pp. 258-265. See also Marion L. Starkey, "The Devil and Cotton Mather," *Puritanism in Early America*, pp. 79-88.

However, the work which has been most injurious to Mather's reputation is his *Diary*. A document of immense value to historians, biographers, and bibliographers, its value as a spiritual record of a tormented being is vitiated by its double entry format, its extreme subjectivity, and the piety and conventionality of its phraseology. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that scholars, after looking into the formidable document, question the validity of Mather's mysticism, doubt the genuineness of his spiritual struggles, and condemn him as a monster of vanity, egoism, and vindictiveness. Even Ralph and Louise Boas, who are highly sympathetic to Mather, complain that Mather "did not transmute his experiences into a philosophy of life; he did not translate his emotions into phrases of universal truth."⁸

There are, I think, a number of very sound explanations for the apparent weaknesses of Mather's *Diary*. Because he is the most famous of the Puritans and because his *Diary* has received the most attention, critics have perhaps failed to recognize what a characteristically Puritan document it is. Mather was the child of a bourgeoisie which had, after rationalizing its economic activities by the adoption of double entry book-keeping, adopted the same practice in its religion. The *Diary*, the source of most of the charges of egoism, cant, and insincerity which have been hurled at Mather, is a typical product of the kind of double entry Christianity practiced by the Puritan middle class.

Business, the reason for being of the middle class, is essentially an asocial activity in which the individual stands alone in the fiercely competitive jungle of the market place. This singularity, this aloneness of the business man, resulted

⁸ Ralph and Louise Boas, *Cotton Mather: Keeper of the Puritan Conscience* (New York, 1928), p. 270.

in a highly personal and subjective world view which also found expression in his religion; and just as the Puritan merchant stood alone in the economic world, so the Puritan, whether merchant or priest, stood alone before his God. His covenant with God was personal and individual, and he had no priestly intermediary to intercede for him. He was placed on earth to labor for the greater glory of God and to do God's will. Because of his prior commitment to God, the Puritan did not ostensibly marry for love: he married because God willed it. He did not gather into communities for the benefits of social living: he formed communities to advance the work of God. He did not indulge in charitable acts out of altruism: he performed them for God. The moral virtues were not socially desirable aims to be striven for but were absolute standards of conduct against which he must measure the degree of his success or failure as a servant of God; and because philosophical principles and ethical values were both in and of God, the Puritan made little or no attempt to abstract them from their source.⁹

Because of his personal commitment to God and because the hand of God lay heavily upon His creation, the Puritan had to examine minutely the Scriptures and the world around him to discover God's will. Because of the doctrine of election, he had to undergo constant and agonizing self-appraisal to insure his inclusion among the elect; and the results of this self-appraisal were characteristically entered as debts and credits in a diary or journal.

Nevertheless, the highly personal reaction of the Puritan to matters of morals and ethics, to his relationship with God, and to his fellows do not make him an ego-devoured monster.

⁹ For an excellent treatment of this particular aspect of Puritan thought see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York, 1939), pp. 111-206.

Nor do the piety of his mode of expression, his constant self-appraisal with its meticulous inventories of good and bad, and the frequent assurances of his own righteousness and election mark him as a monster of cant, complacency, and hypocrisy. The Puritan was a socially responsible being; he could love; and he could act out of pure altruism. Moreover, he was concerned with the larger application of moral and ethical values; and if critics of Puritanism have failed to perceive this concern, it is because they have failed to understand the Puritan metaphor in which concern for such matters has been expressed.

In the case of Cotton Mather, whose use of the metaphor is perhaps excessive, this misunderstanding is complete. Because Mather has received more attention than most Puritan diarists and because the form, tone, and phraseology of his *Diary* are repellant to modern taste, many scholars, forgetting its conventionality, have constructed a picture of Cotton Mather that is strangely at variance with the picture one receives from studying his other writings.

Therefore, it is necessary, I think, to understand the metaphor, to discount the pious phraseology, and to make allowances for the great subjectivity of the *Diary* in order to realize that it is a genuine spiritual record of the griefs, frustrations, and temptations of a tortured man. Viewed in its entirety, it represents a sustained attempt to justify the ways of a God who promised much and delivered little. It also indirectly records the decline and fall of the Mather dynasty and the reactions of a member of that dynasty to its decline and fall. When it begins in 1681, the Mather domination of Boston is at its height; and Cotton Mather, the heir-apparent, has all Boston at his feet. His preaching is a success; he sits in the councils of the great; and all doors are open to him. When it

ends forty-odd years later, he is a broken failure, filled with a sense of defeat, isolated from the mainstream of Boston life, and waiting eagerly for the death which will relieve him. He has buried thirteen children and two wives, and each time he has prayed that the cup might be allowed to pass. When it did not, he humbled himself in the dust, acknowledged his own sin before God, and sought to render his own grief useful and meaningful to his flock.

In 1696 Mather's vanity had indeed grown to such proportions that Abel's comment that with Mather the Trinity was in danger of becoming a Quadrity¹⁰ seems entirely justified. Sincerely believing that he was a chosen vessel of God and that he was destined to do great things in His service, God seems reduced, in Mather's *Diary* at this time, to a mere assistant status. A storm threatens a projected trip to Salem and Ipswich, and God obligingly intervenes so that Mather can complete his journey. A famine threatens; Mather prays for succour; and strangely the next day a vessel arrives, bringing the needed food. After wrestling mightily with the Lord, he receives the assurance that

a mighty Convulsion shall be given to the French Empire; and that *England, Scotland, and Ireland*, shall be speedily Illuminated, with glorious Anticipations of the *Kingdome of God*. Moreover, a Revolution upon the *Turkish Empire*, which is now attempted by Troubles in Asia, I cryed unto the Lord for; that so wee may have another good Symptom of the Approach of the Time, when the *Kingdomes of this world shall become the Kingdomes of our Lord and of His Christ*.

Tis the Apprehension of *mighty Changes* at hand, that Causes mee to be thus extraordinarily before the Lord. I would by extra-

¹⁰ Abel, I, 58.

ordinary Devotions, *prepare* for those Changes and obtain from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mercy of being eminently *serviceable* in them.¹¹

Also during this time of exuberant egoism, he resolves to

become a *Remembrancer* unto the Lord, for no less than whole *Peoples*, Nations, and Kingdomes. I apprehended with myself that if I would thus lay to Heart the *Concerns* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the State of the whole *Peoples*, and Continue, with extraordinary Supplications crying to Heaven, for mercy to them, I should bee more *Angelically* disposed and employed, than I have been heretofore; and I should prepare myself also very *extensive Services* to bee done by mee; and I should enjoy unutterable *Communications* from the Holy Ghost then Delighting in mee; yea, and perhaps *Manifestations* of what the Lord is *going to do in the Earth*.¹²

Later that day he records the visit of "an honest Man of *Salem*." The man entered his study, embraced him, asked to be allowed to serve him, and began a discourse on spiritual pride. Mather rather naively concludes that he could not but wonder at "these Discourses" and resolves to ponder with himself "whether the *Good Angels* of the Lord Jesus Christ, might not have a particular Design in them."¹³

By 1721, however, the prestige of the Mathers has reached its lowest ebb. Young Increase is causing more and more trouble; a new church is enticing many parishioners away from Cotton Mather's ministry; and he is faced by an ever more serious domestic crisis aggravated by his own flagging sexual capabilities. His financial status, never very secure, is more precarious than ever; a ship captain has named a slave

¹¹ *Diary*, I, 207–208.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

after him; and he is engaged in controversies over a new church and smallpox inoculation. He feels an ever-increasing sense of alienation, and his *Diary* is filled with denunciations of the wicked and ungrateful people he has striven so long to serve. He finds more and more comfort in drawing parallels between his sufferings and those of Christ, and he is more resigned to suffering in this world. However his resignation did not preclude his making the following entry for December 17, 1721:

My Brother has a pretty Fancy, in his Discourse of *Temptations*; that Ministers, who meet with Abuses from sorry and scoundrel people, have cause to look on themselves as humbled, on the Account of their having the *Egyptian* Plague therefore to be very *humble*. Under the Assaults and Insults of contemptible People, I must behave myself, as under the Fulfilment of that Word, *my God will Humble Me*.¹⁴

This is virtually his last outburst, however, for the many troubles of the year have broken him. In 1724, broken in health and spirits, he writes that for nearly fifty years he has not gone into company without contriving to speak something that it might be better and wiser for. "AND YETT, my *Company* is as little sought for, and there is as little Resort unto it as any Ministers that I am acquainted with." He reports also that his life has been taken up with good offices and that he has sought them with alacrity. "AND YETT, I see no man for whom all are so lothe to do *good Offices*. . . . Often have I said, What would I give, if there were any *one Man* in the World, willing to do for me, What I am willing to do for *every Man*, in the World."¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., II, 665.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 707.

Those who see Cotton Mather as a vain and vindictive egoist can find plenty of evidence in the youthful Mather to support their charges of vanity, and they can also find in the older Mather plenty of evidence to support their charges of vindictiveness. However, the early egoism was the natural egoism of youth. Mather was, after all, the grandson of John Cotton and Richard Mather; he was the son of Increase Mather; and he was destined both by birth and by, he believed, divine decree to perform great works for the Lord. None of them materialized, and portions of the later *Diary* contain the exasperated expostulations of a very provoked and disappointed man.

However, there is to be found, between the extremes of a youthful and somewhat egoistic optimism and the angry disillusionment of a disappointed and badgered old age, the essential Cotton Mather. He is to be found, I think, in his complete and utter devotion to his calling, in his concern for its integrity, in his submission and dedication to his God, in his not always successful determination to turn the other cheek, in his insistent and more successful determination to return good for evil, in his loyalty and concern for his father, in his love and concern for his children, and in the many concrete acts of charity which he was constantly performing.

All of these are recorded in the *Diary* as is the picture he gives us of his practice of filling his pockets with treats or pennies to distribute to the children he met on his daily rounds. The *Diary* also records his renunciation of the one great passion of his life for the good of his ministry; it reveals the sacrifice of the economic well being of his family for that of his church; and it reveals how this monster of vanity urged part of his congregation who had to make a dangerous ferry trip to attend services to form a church of their own and how

he offered to pay part of the expense of a minister out of his own pocket.

It is interesting to speculate upon what course Cotton Mather's life might have taken had his father not lived as long as he did. Kenneth Murdock notes that after 1701 Increase Mather was content to let his son carry the brunt of his battles,¹⁶ and one wonders how responsible the elder Mather was for the controversies and the subsequent disappointments and sense of alienation which darkened the latter half of Cotton Mather's life. Mather's entries in the *Diary* for 1713 contain an unusual number of references to his father. A new church is being formed in Boston; and Mather is, in addition to being concerned over his father's health, highly concerned about soothing his father's indignation over the new church and in keeping him from saying anything to aggravate an already troubled situation. The following excerpt from the *Diary* is, I think, revealing in the light it sheds on his relationship to both his father and the endless controversy which ruined his career and brought down on him the ridicule, if not the anathema of posterity. On January 24, 1713-14, he makes the following entry. There is no other like it in the *Diary*:

I must cry mightily to the God who forms the Spirit of Man within him, that my aged Parent may have his Mind made easy, with relation to the new Church swarming in our Neighborhood. His Uneasiness is the worst, and in a Manner the only, Part of mine; and his placid and pleasant Encounter with the Occurrences of this affair, will glorify God, and be an Honour to our holy Religion, and a great Comfort unto me. ¹⁷

¹⁶ Kenneth Murdock, *Increase Mather: the Foremost American Puritan* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 376.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

No further comment is, I think, necessary about the position of Cotton Mather in the controversies which swirled about him during his lifetime. He was the victim of a father who outlived his prestige and usefulness for more than thirty years. Increase Mather bitterly resented the loss of his prestige and the changes which he saw occurring around him; and filled with resentment at his own repudiation, he fastened both himself and his rancor upon a loyal and dutiful son. It is not saying too much, I think, to state that Cotton Mather sacrificed both his career and much of his temporal happiness in a cause that was never really his own; and that with the single exception cited above, he never once complained of the sacrifice or the burden. He remained to the end a loving and dutiful son.

Cotton Mather has been damned by posterity more by the accident of birth than by any real lack of merit in him. He was born in a transitional period and he struggled mightily under the combined burden of a disappointed and contentious father, an inherited orthodoxy, and a demanding and omnipresent God throughout most of his life. He served all three loyally and uncomplainingly. He had considerable vanity and perhaps more than his share of pride; and if today his attempts to come to grips with them seem to be false and insincere, it is because we are unable to understand the man and the metaphor by which he spoke. If today his spate of publications seem to justify neither the grandiose hopes he had for them nor the naive pride he took in them, we should, in charity, judge the intent, not the result. His published works and his other projects to do good were about the only temporal consolations Cotton Mather received in a lifetime of trying to do good. And however we may judge these attempts today, Mather devoted his life to the doing of them.

He was a good man by the standards of his own or any other time; and the burden of guilt for the myth of Cotton Mather must, in the final analysis, rest not upon him but upon posterity.

TWO POEMS

BY SIDNEY J. LANDMAN

RUSKIN

Raggedy Andy's through.
Stuffed into the corner of a forgotten shelf,
The once-loved toy succumbs eternally
To the caresses of dust, spiders, and Time.
Unnoticed are the sawdust hemorrhages that bedizen
Decay.

Carrot yarn, once small shocks,
Is first to make the light collation of
Silverfish.
Carefully applied rouge—roses in those plumpish cheeks
beside triangle nose—

Blackens.
Lumpy guts and gingham rompers
Coalesce in cosmic
Mildew.

We shall not weep
For Andy—
This Andy, Handy Dandy,
Or pity him his throe.
The sunshine warp and woof
Extexturing his soul
Is often
Clouded.

DROPOUT

Unlovely and minimal, you flee Northwest South-
eastern College

In florid chase of wars improbable,
Brushing by the idle crumbs of Terence
And oceanography.

The hero's tour will roast the greenness of your soul
And sear eternally the fustian of academe.

Wizened and oracular, a tutor
Sharpens pencils against your return
And prays that he can teach you once again
The things that you have learned.

REVIEWS

ELIZABETHAN BIBLIOGRAPHIES SUPPLEMENTS. Volume One: Thomas Middleton and John Webster; Volume Two: Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, and Cyril Tourneur. *Compiled by* Dennis Donovan. London: *The Nether Press*, 1967. \$4.90 each (limited edition of 500 paper-bound copies).

The burgeoning industry of Elizabethan studies will be advanced by the series of supplements to Samuel A. Tannenbaum's Elizabethan bibliographies published in the early- and mid-1940's. The series is edited by Charles A. Pennel. Dennis Donovan, the compiler, has extended the bibliographies to 1965. He makes no attempt to classify entries by type (books, articles, critical editions, dissertations, and the like); instead, he has chosen to list each item alphabetically by year. Thus the first item in Webster's bibliography for 1964 is Alexander W. Allison's article, "Ethical Themes in *The Duchess of Malfi*," followed by Fordyce Judson Bennett's dissertation on the use of the Bible by several playwrights including Webster. The 1964 entry closes with a German translation of *The White Devil* edited by Robert Weimann, each entry for editions appearing under the playwright's name.

Each supplement takes up with the year following the discontinuation of Dr. Tannenbaum's bibliography, but no attempt is made to continue Dr. Tannenbaum's numbering system. Each volume numbers the entries *seriatim*, the last entry under Dekker numbered 168 and the first entry under Heywood numbered 169. The recent republication of Tannenbaum's bibliographical series decidedly increases the value of these supplements.

The series will eventually include Jonson, Herrick, and Randolph; Chapman and Marston; Sidney, Daniel, and Drayton; Marlowe; The University Wits; Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, and others; Minor Elizabethans; and Robert Burton and Thomas Browne.

Students who have used some of Dr. Tannenbaum's bibliographies have had reason to complain of the omission of publishers' names and sometimes of series titles and volume numbers. Since some libraries choose to shelve titles in series together, the student may experience avoidable difficulty in locating the volume he wants. Unfortunately, the present compiler continues Dr. Tannenbaum's practice. Since three important series of modern-spelling editions of Elizabethan plays are presently in progress, the occasional omission of series title becomes inconvenient. Under Heywood, for example, editions published by the Malone Society are so noted, but Alan Holaday's edition of *The Rape of Lucrece* (Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, XXXIV, 3) and Richard W. Van Fossen's edition of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (The Revels Plays) lack series identifications. In addition, a short title list of plays contained in each volume of Fredson Bowers' monumental edition of Thomas Dekker's *Dramatic Works*, each volume published in different years, would be useful; one would not expect similar care for the 1964 reprint of the old Pearson edition of Heywood's dramatic works.

A few errors have intruded into the bibliographical entries. Clifford Leech's *Webster: The Duchess of Malfi* is a short critical essay published in Edward Arnold's *Studies in English Literature* series, a series intended chiefly for British undergraduates and sixth-formers, and should not be listed under Webster's name as though it were an edition of the play. Charles L. Barber's *The Idea of Honour in the English Drama, 1591-1700* (items 145 under Middleton, 406 under Webster, 078 under Dekker, 246 under Heywood, and 388 under Tourneur) was published at Göteborg (Gothenburg Studies in English, VI), not Stockholm.

Such mistakes, however, detract only slightly from the usefulness of the series. The student will discover to his delight that the compiler has included a selected list of reviews under entries of major works. More important, the entries include British dissertations as well as American. In fact, the compiler seems to have cast his net widely to include foreign scholarship, even translations of Elizabethan plays. Before the Annual Bibliography of *PMLA* assumed its present international character, the American student sometimes overlooked foreign publications. The series has a promising beginning and will eventually include writers not represented by the Tannenbaum bibliographies.

JOHN S. LEWIS

THE AMERICAN LITERARY REVOLUTION 1783-1837. *Edited by Robert Spiller. New York University Press, 1967. \$7.50.*

The American Literary Revolution continues the Documents in American Civilization Series under the general editorship of Henig Cohen and John William Ward. The series itself shows the importance of documents in their historical setting. It is a valuable series of books for both the teacher and student of American life.

Twenty-nine documents with Professor Spiller's introductory comments make up the text of *The American Literary Revolution* which is itself a part of another revolution, a revolution in reprinting documents from library holdings. This revolution has enabled scholars to bring rare works of literary history together in books which serve as primary material for the student of literature. The task of the literary historian, a task performed quite skillfully by Professor Spiller in this book, is that of selecting documents which not only have an individual meaning, but also have a total meaning which emerges in relation to the entire body of documents used.

The documents used in *The American Literary Revolution* relate the story of this country's desire to come of age intellectually and culturally. As a total body of work they show the hesitancy, the apology as well as the belligerency of intellectual nationalism.

Documents representing the period of 1783 to 1815 show primarily a zeal for intellectual independence even in the face of a restricting demand for practicality. That demand for the practical is best revealed in Part V of the book in what Professor Spiller calls "Circumstantial Evidence." This chapter shows that among books printed in the 1820's those of a practical nature were more in demand than were those of a literary nature. Part I, "The Aftermath of Independence," begins with the humor of Freneau in which he advises writers about what practical rules they can adopt in the face of poverty. "If you cannot at all exist without now and then gratifying your itch for scribbling, follow my example who can both weave stockings and write poems" (p. 10). Other writers voiced the call for intellectual independence more strongly than did Freneau, and Webster called for a native idiom. The beginnings of a national spirit of letters were there, but the audience was missing; and by 1815 scholars began trying to explain the cultural inferiority of the young nation.

From 1815 to 1820 the voices of nationalism became more insistent. At this time the nation had won the power to expand its borders, and writers began to speak out with greater spirit. Politically the United States had become more independent. Intellectually they made a hopeful beginning with the founding of the *North American Review*. The early writers of this periodical "were arguing vigorously for a national literature" (p. 110). But the writers of the *North American Review* were split into two groups. Channing represented those writers who were eager for an immediate national literature, and Dana represented those who urged patience. Of the two, Dana's stand sounds much more reasonable today. In spite of the split, however, the groundwork for a native literature was laid during the period of 1815-1820 by the group then writing for the *North American Review*.

The next ten-year period documented by Professor Spiller, from 1820 to 1830, shows an emerging American literature in the work of Irving, Cooper and Bryant, and near the end of the period the "final touch to literary maturity" is shown with the publication of *Webster's American Dictionary* (p. 238). Spiller's introductory comments to this part of the book account for a change from the influences of the "Scottish rationalists to the English and German romantics" (p. 237). It was, however, "not until well after 1837 that the basic principles of American romanticism were fully defined and generally accepted" (p. 238).

Part IV of *The American Literary Revolution* presents the voice of the American literary professional, of which Irving was the first. He was also the first "American to conquer both the American and the British reading publics" (p. 337). Irving is represented by "The Author's Account of Himself," a piece displaying a genuine American flavor. "I will visit this land of wonders, therefore, thought I, and see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated" (p. 380). Paulding, another professional, is represented by "National Literature," which expresses the feeling that Americans, at least in the case of Charles Brockden Brown, must still be proven by foreign criticism. Paulding makes the prediction that soon the people of the United States will become sufficiently independent to "express their admiration" of one of their own writers (p. 386). Longfellow's essay, following that of Paulding's, sounds a note of great optimism and predicts both a fruitful and a romantic future:

Is then our land to be indeed the land of song? Will it one day be

rich in romantic associations? Will poetry that hallows every scene, that renders every spot classical and pours out on all things the soul of its enthusiasm, breathe over it that enchantment which lives in the isles of Greece, and is more than life amid the "woods that wave o'er Delphi's steep." Yes!—and palms are to be won by native writers! . . . (p. 387)

Longfellow's "yes" is important even though he sounds somewhat like a man shouting into a barrel.

Cooper's remarks show that he had honestly faced the issues involved in having a national literature. He also shows a broad knowledge of the entire cultural situation, not merely the field of literature. He does more to create understanding of his country's situation than he does to argue for literary nationalism. He does not argue against literary nationalism, however, as Poe does. Poe argues that there has been too much "puffing of good, bad, and indifferent" just because it is American.

The documents culminate with Emerson's "The American Scholar," a document which need not be reviewed here. It is quite interesting to notice Emerson's concern with original genius and then turn back to Document 9 and find Emerson's teacher, Edward Tyrell Channing, expressing much earlier the idea that perhaps we are too much tyrannized by the classics instead of depending upon our originality.

The American Literary Revolution has the great merit of being adaptable to many uses. It may be used as a book of primary sources. It may be used as a textbook for American literature, and it may be read with a sense of discovery and with a great deal of pleasure. Many of the documents used show a feeling of genuine concern about the role this country was to play intellectually and culturally. Some of the most striking passages are those which furnish definitions of a natural literature.

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